

Interior ministers vow to crack down on terrorism

TUNIS (AFP) — Interior ministers from Arab countries pledged Friday to unite their countries' forces in fighting terrorism in a "code of conduct" adopted here unanimously. A final communiqué issued by the Arab League's council of interior ministers said all 21 nations represented at the two-day meeting would forgo any involvement in terrorist activities. They would also not allow their countries to become the theatre for the planning and execution of terrorist acts. The new code of conduct is based on a draft submitted by Egypt and Algeria a year ago. Both countries have been wracked by Muslim fundamentalist unrest for several years. The guidelines set up by a joint committee over the last year "forbid all member countries to welcome, shelter, train, arm or finance terrorist or destructive elements," the communiqué said. Signatories will also cooperate closely in investigations and the arrest of terrorist suspects and convicts and coordinate border controls.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Royal Jordanian has the pleasure to announce that its new Information Center at QAIA is now operational 24 hours a day. Any information concerning the movement of its fleet to and from Amman could be obtained through Tel # 08/53200

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Syria, Israel upbeat after 2nd round talks in U.S.

IT WAS possible to reach agreement with Israel on major issues after the latest round of peace talks ended near Washington.

"The results of these discussions show that it is possible to reach substantial progress on the essential questions," Walid Muallem, the lead Syrian negotiator, told the official SANA news agency.

Describing the session as "serious and useful," Mr. Muallem said there were still "difficulties and gaps in the two parties' positions on certain essential elements to peace."

Mr. Muallem, who was speaking from outside Washington, where the talks took place, said the negotiations centred on several issues, notably an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

They also discussed the normalisation of relations, security arrangements and a timetable for implementation, he said.

"The discussion also evoked a larger framework, given the fact that Syria is the key to a just and global peace in the region," said Mr. Muallem, the Syrian ambassador to the United States.

He also said the results of this second round of negotiations would be the basis of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's visit to the region next week.

He said Mr. Christopher's participation in part of the negotiations was "a serious sign of the U.S. commitment to establish a just and comprehensive peace in the region."

"This participation also confirms that the United States has given priority to the Syrian and Lebanese peace tracks in 1996," he said.

In Washington State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said:

"All three delegations believe that the discussions were fruitful, constructive and practical," reading a statement drawn up by U.S. Middle East negotiator Dennis Ross on behalf of the three nations in the talks.

"The discussions were conducted in a positive and open atmosphere. A good start was made in developing a general basis for progress on substance and on the procedures for dealing with the main issues to be overcome."

But, he added, "a great deal of work" remains to be done.

No date was given for the resumption of talks.

The two rounds of discussions since December 27 were the first between the Middle East rivals since negotiations broke down six months ago over the Golan Heights.

Israel has been demanding that its withdrawal from the strategic Golan Heights be linked to an overall peace pact. The plateau was seized in a 1967 war.

Israel's lead negotiator Uri Savir told Israeli television: "We had positive discussions, we have clarified many questions."

"The second session this week was more positive than the first," he said. "We will return to Israel with a clearer idea of Syrian positions and, more importantly, the capacity to make progress in the future, and we still have a lot of work to do."

Secretary of State Warren Christopher would be making "some suggestions" to Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad, said Mr. Burns, who indicated the negotiations would be heading home for instructions from their governments. Mr. Christopher is to travel to the Middle East for consultations on the peace process next week.

"We are very pleased, very encouraged both on substance and procedure," said Mr. Burns. "We are struck by the very positive tone and atmosphere of these negotiations."

Yossi Beilin, the Israeli minister heading the peace process, had said earlier that: "For the moment, we see no

change in the Syrian position on the question of normalisation and security arrangements" that would accompany an Israeli retreat from the Golan.

"Syria also needs to show flexibility on border questions," he said, referring to a key sticking point: the magnitude of an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan.

Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak said on television that after Mr. Christopher's tour of the region later this month, "it will be possible to continue the negotiations within the same framework, but perhaps including generals and economists in the delegations."

"It is not possible to yet fix a date to reach an accord," it's a long process that awaits U.S., Mr. Barak said.

Mr. Barak predicted before the talks broke up that Israeli-Syrian peace talks which resumed last week at the 18th century Wye Plantation on Maryland's eastern shore "many months" to go.

"We have not started talking about a withdrawal" from the Golan Heights, he said. "We are following what is going on at the negotiating table with cautious optimism and we must not expect results within one or two days."

Important issues such as water-sharing, security and fighting terrorism were not discussed, Mr. Barak said.

Royal Court: Jerusalem Post report 'totally erroneous'

Jordan strongly supports Palestinian legitimate rights, peace in the region

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan has described as "totally erroneous" statements by Israeli Foreign Ministry officials that the Kingdom was concerned about the emergence of an independent Palestinian entity and was worried that progress on the Syrian track of the peace talks would diminish its role.

The statements, which were attributed by the Jerusalem Post to a high ranking Israeli foreign ministry official, said that Jordanians were concerned that if there was progress with Syria, "Jordan will be pushed out of the limelight and will have to share both Israeli and American attention with Syria and the Palestinians."

"They feel encircled... they feel Jordan's role will be diminished," the Post quoted the ministry official in its Wednesday edition as saying.

The paper quoted the official as saying that Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak assured

Jordanian officials during his visit here Tuesday that the Kingdom will have a vital role to play in the permanent settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The assurance was given, the Post quoted the official as saying, after Jordanians made clear their concern that a Palestinian entity, which could have wide ranging, negative ramifications for the Kingdom, is being established right in front of their eyes.

The paper also quoted the official as saying that Jordan was more concerned with the Palestinian elections than with the Syrian track and that Jordanian officials were not very optimistic about progress with the Syrians because "they know the Syrians."

The statements in "all (their) contexts and context (are) totally erroneous," the Royal Court statement, which was authorised by His Majesty King Hussein, said.

Reasserting Jordan's support for the Palestinian people as they strive to secure

their legitimate rights on their legitimate national soil, the statement said that Jordan "has been and is totally supportive of the Palestinian legitimate leadership and all its efforts to secure legitimate Palestinian rights."

"Jordan will never infringe upon Palestinian affairs beyond supporting the Palestinian people and their leadership," the statement added.

Stating that the subject of Palestinian elections was never raised in the talks King Hussein held with Mr. Barak Tuesday, the statement said "His Majesty is fully supportive of the elections being held according to plan."

After his talks with Mr. Barak, the King told reporters that Jordan shares the Palestinians their joy over the achievements they have made in their talks with the Israelis. He reiterated Jordan's support for the Palestinians in a joint press conference which he held with Mr. Barak.

The Royal Court statement

emphasised Jordan's commitment to a comprehensive peace in the region, noting that all parties to the Arab-Israeli talks started from the same point in Madrid in 1991 and with the same purpose of achieving a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

"The mood in Jordan is one of optimism regarding the current Syrian-Israeli negotiations and welcomes their early successful conclusion," said the statement.

In his joint press conference with Mr. Barak, the King welcomed the progress on the Syrian track of the talks, stressing the Kingdom's commitment to comprehensive peace.

Finally, said the statement, Jordan is not in the least concerned that its role will be marginalised once comprehensive peace in the region is achieved.

"Nor has Jordan ever been or will be as small as to begrudge any and all parties their rights to the full benefits of peace," said the statement.

Jordan hosts UNCTAD's Asian group Tuesday

By Ghaila Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The 8th Asian ministerial meeting for the Group of 77 will open here Tuesday to prepare for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) which will be held in South Africa in April.

In a press conference Thursday, Mohammad Smadi, the secretary general of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, told reporters that His Majesty King Hussein will open the three-day meeting which will tackle issues of interest to the world community and especially the developing countries.

The UNCTAD conference, that Jordan will chair until 1999, will bring together 46 Asian countries as well as 26 United Nations bodies.

Awai Bahnam, the secretary general of UNCTAD, told reporters at the press conference, that choosing

Jordan to be the president of this conference was not coincidental but an endorsement of its economic reform as well as its development policies.

"Jordan's role will not end by the end of this conference, because it will represent the Asian group in all international activities, political and economic negotiations, as well as development issues that the UNCTAD will address during the next four years," said Dr. Bahnam.

He added that this conference will grant the Asian countries the opportunity to gather and exchange experiences in addition to finding ways to cooperate and establish economic complementarity.

Dr. Smadi told reporters that ahead of the Tuesday ministerial meeting Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker will open a two-day preparatory meeting for senior participants.

Dr. Smadi, who chairs the

Jordanian preparatory committee, added that during the preparatory meeting which will convene at the Royal Cultural Centre today, officials will discuss unemployment, poverty, foreign investment, indebtedness, economies of developing countries, and cooperation among Third World countries.

The ministerial meeting is expected to issue two documents which Dr. Smadi said Jordan will present to the next UNCTAD meeting in four years.

He added that the first document, known as the "Amman Declaration," will cover various development issues pertinent to the Asian group as well as investment, technology transfer, indebtedness, poverty and unemployment. It will also address the advanced countries' role

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Palestinians announce 'engineer' killed, blame Israeli Mossad

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — A senior Palestinian security source confirmed on Friday that Hamas bombmaker Yahya Ayyash was killed in Gaza and that Palestinian police had the body.

The source, who declined to be identified, said police believed Mr. Ayyash was killed instantly when a cellular telephone packed with 50 grammes of explosives blew up.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) condemned the killing.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's senior advisor, Nabil Abu Rudeina, said: "We strongly condemn this unacceptable operation which took place in a territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority."

"All Palestinian security services have been ordered to carry out an urgent and full investigation," he told AFP.

He added that "the perpetrators will be held fully responsible for their actions," without going into details.

Mr. Ayyash, nicknamed "the engineer" by Israeli forces who had hunted him for more than two years, died in a house at Beit Lahia, in the north of the Gaza Strip, the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP.

"He used a telephone which was apparently booby-trapped. We don't know who interfered with it," he said, adding that Mr. Ayyash's



Yahya Ayyash

head was completely blown off.

Palestinian police sealed off the house and arrested a Palestinian living there, Ekrima Hammad, a Hamas activist, the official added. He said Mr. Ayyash's body was handed over to the militant fundamentalist movement.

Earlier reports gave conflicting accounts of the killing. Israeli radio and television reports said he was shot dead in Beit Lahia along with another person, possibly his wife Hayam.

Israeli state radio earlier said that Mr. Ayyash, a Palestinian from the West Bank regarded as Israel's enemy number one, died in an explosion in the neighbouring Jabaliya refugee camp on the autonomous Gaza Strip.

The radio said that Israeli

(Continued on page 7)

Britain denies offering aid to Dominica to shelter Masaari, admits trade motives

LONDON (Agencies) — Britain on Friday denied a press report that it had offered aid to the Caribbean island state of Dominica in return for refuge to Saudi dissident Mohammad Al Masaari, who was ordered out of Britain this week.

A foreign office spokesman said Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind had met with Dominica's Prime Minister Edison James on Dec. 18, but said there had been "no linkage between aid and the offer of refuge to Mr. Masaari."

The Independent newspaper said Friday that Dominica had been promised an increase in foreign aid from the £500,000 (\$750,000) it received in 1994-95 to some £2 million (\$3 million) for the following year.

The foreign office spokesman said aid to Dominica was normally around £2 million a year. He said the former British colony had in 1993 been promised a grant of £5 million, contingent on clearance of its debt arrears.

This announcement clearly predates the Masaari problem," he said.

Mr. Masaari, 49, who came to Britain 18 months ago from Yemen after escaping from a Saudi prison, was this

week ordered expelled by the Home Office, which cited threats to Saudi-British diplomatic and business interests.

Mr. Masaari, who has waged a vociferous paper campaign against the Saudi regime from his base in London, has been a thorn in the side of both governments and the Home Office made clear his continued presence here was endangering billions in Saudi defence contracts.

Mr. Masaari on Friday suggested that Britain's reputation as a shelter for the persecuted could be "smashed against the rocks."

In an article in the Independent newspaper, he accused the British government of abandoning its human rights principles for commercial gain in yielding to the pressure from the governing Saudi royal family.

"Britain could never have been in the centre stage of the world for such a long time if she had been a totalitarian state," he wrote.

"Is the British tradition of giving a home to freedom fighters to be dashed against the rocks?"

British newspapers echoed Mr. Masaari's criticism of the government for bowing to commercial pressures.

The government has admitted economic considerations played a key part in the decision. British defence firms are seeking orders worth billions of dollars from the Middle Eastern state.

Home Office Minister Ann Widdecombe said British interests required the removal of Mr. Masaari, citing "enormous export considerations."

"The Saudi government has been constantly campaigning and stepping up the pressure to have me deported," Mr. Masaari wrote in the newspaper article.

"They have done this by lobbying, phoning and writing to everyone they could think of."

In leading articles, British newspapers agreed.

"Britain looks ludicrous and evasive at the same time," said the left-leaning Guardian newspaper.

"His departure may serve our immediate commercial interest, but the moral cost is high," said the Times, which generally supports Britain's Conservative government.

Mr. Masaari, using a computer and a fax in his London home to disseminate information to allies back home, has campaigned for an Islamic government to replace the Saudi monarchy.

Budget clears House after compromise on salary raises

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament Thursday endorsed the JD 1,745 million draft budget for 1996 with a majority of 52 deputies (out of 74 present) but only after the government won a heated debate in which the legislators insisted on raising the salaries of government employees from JD 10 to JD 15.

While deputies insisted on a minimum of JD 15 increase in salaries as opposed to the JD 10 promised by the government, the government explained that the state's budget did not afford an additional financial burden.

The breakthrough came, however, when the government agreed to advance the date for the JD 10 increase by five months, from the original May 1 to Jan. 1, 1996.

In a reply made after the marathon debate lasted for three days, in which lawmakers showered the government with complaints and demands, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker defended his government policies as rational and necessary at this stage and promised a better

future if cooperation between the public and the private sectors was enhanced.

"Strict measures, which might not be popular, should be adopted to achieve self-reliance as outlined by our economic reform programme," the prime minister told the House. "But we are convinced that these are necessary measures that will finally lead to better conditions and help in reducing the country's dependence on foreign assistance and aid."

"We, at the same time, will make sure that limited income earners would not be affected by these measures. On the contrary we will try to make them benefit from (the measures)," he said.

Ever since the budget debate started on Tuesday, lawmakers of different blocs and political affiliations heavily criticised what they described as the worsening economic conditions in the Kingdom and called on the government to take the appropriate measures to fight poverty and increase wages of employees to go hand in hand with price hikes.

While Sharif Zeid promised that the raise of JD 10 promised by the government

to start in May will now be effective as of Jan. 1, in line with the recommendations of the House's Finance Committee, he explained to the House that the government would not be able to allocate more of its budget funds to salary increases as the majority of the House requested.

"The government shares the finance committee's concerns over the price hikes," said the prime minister. "At present, the government is looking into a law to combat monopoly which is expected to be finalised in the next few months."

"We are aware of the fact that civil and military employees' salaries should be dramatically reconsidered... but the general financial circumstances do not allow additional increase to what the government has already proposed."

Lawmakers had protested that certain allocations in the budget to government institutions and ministries should be reduced and the funds transformed into an increase in the employees' salaries.

While it was not possible for the government to do this, as both the prime minister and Minister of Finance

Basel Jardaneh noted, most of the deputies who spoke at Thursday's session insisted on their demand.

They said that a petition signed by 44 deputies demanding an increase of JD 15 gave them the right to pressure the government and even turn their proposal into a law. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh said that the proposal was not constitutional.

Referring to the Constitution, Mr. Rawabdeh said that Parliament had no right, during discussions of the draft budget or its annexes, to increase spending either through introducing amendments or making new proposals. Parliament can only reduce spending or propose new laws that allow for new expenditures.

Deputies, Toujan Faisal in particular, strongly disagreed with Mr. Rawabdeh, pointing out that the recommendations of the finance committee were drafted by a majority while the petition was signed by the House's majority.

A proposal to refer the 44 deputies' demand to the government was put to a vote. Fifty out of 75 deputies voted in favour.

However, Mr. Jardaneh promised that there would not be additional taxes for 1996. "On the contrary customs fees have

been reduced to 50 per cent as of Jan. 1 except for cars, alcohol and cigarettes," the minister confirmed.

"The sales tax had a very marginal impact on limited income families because it was not imposed on most of the basic commodities consumed by this group," he said. "The increase had only affected commodities that are used by relatively high income earners," he added.

"I have said in the budget report, very clearly, that the official statistics show that the general level of prices is stable and within safe limits and is not subject to pressures of inflation that might negatively affect our living standards."

Almost all the deputies who addressed the House complained of price hikes and low wages. Citing figures of the National Society for Consumer Protection, they said that the price of more than 70 commodities had increased and called on the government to either put an end to the hikes or take part in fixing prices.

"What the consumer society stated could not be considered an acceptable scientific analysis of index numbers," Mr. Jardaneh said. "Its method is closer to collecting information randomly. The government will form a committee to study the cost of living index."

(Continued on page 3)

Eritrea says no breakthrough in islands dispute with Yemen

NAIROBI (Agencies) — Eritrea said on Friday there was no major breakthrough in Ethiopian efforts to mediate its dispute with Yemen over Red Sea islands.

Yemane Ghebremeskel, director in President Issayas Afewerki's office, also hit out at the Yemeni parliament for passing a resolution calling on its government to regain the disputed Greater Hanish island seized by Eritrea last month.

"There is no new ground. The shuttle by the Ethiopian minister is still going on," he said in reference to the latest visit to Eritrea by Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin on Thursday.

Ethiopia is mediating the

dispute between Arab Yemen and African Eritrea and Mr. Mesfin has submitted a draft agreement on solving the dispute.

"The process is continuing but we cannot talk of any breakthrough, any developments," Mr. Yemane told Reuters by telephone from Asmara.

He said Thursday's resolution by Yemen's parliament calling for the government to regain Greater Hanish by all legitimate means was "mischievous and childish" and warned Eritrea would respond in kind.

The parliament urged the government to "regain the occupied Greater Hanish by all legitimate ways and means

... (and) remove the traces of ... the treacherous Eritrean aggression."

"It's a wrong attitude and if they insist on implementing that resolution then we can only respond in kind," Mr. Yemane warned adding, "we do not however want controversy or escalation."

A sovereignty dispute over the Greater Hanish archipelago triggered air and sea clashes last month in which at least 12 people were killed and 213 Yemenis were taken prisoner by the Eritreans. Asmara freed them last week.

Yemen and Eritrea both claim sovereignty over the Greater and Lesser Hanish islands that are near vital

shipping lanes.

Diplomats say oil and tourism are at the heart of the dispute over the small, arid islands.

Yemen, a small and independent oil producer, insists talks on defining sea borders between two countries, facing each other across the Red Sea, can start only after the withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Greater Hanish.

But Mr. Yemane said a unilateral withdrawal by Eritrea was out of the question and instead repeated Asmara's position that the whole archipelago be demilitarised.

"This means Yemen pulling its troops out of other islands in the area. We are ready to do that but it must

be simultaneous," he said.

Meanwhile, officials in Sanaa said Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa will travel to Sanaa on Saturday, stepping up Cairo's efforts to mediate in the dispute between Yemen and Eritrea.

Mr. Musa will be carrying a message from President Hosni Mubarak to his Yemeni counterpart Ali Abdallah Saleh on Egypt's mediation in the dispute over the Hanish archipelago, an official said.

"Egypt wants the countries bordering the Red Sea to maintain navigation and the security of this waterway," the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP.



ARAFAT AND RIVAL'S SON: Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat stands with Abel-Ghain Yassin, son of his main rival Israeli-jailed Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, when he attended the wedding of the Hamas leader's son January 4. Arafat presented the 20-year-old with a gold necklace and earrings to give to his bride (Reuters photo)

Israel, S. Korea discuss military cooperation

SEOUL, South Korea (R) — Israel and South Korea on Thursday began "intensive" talks which were believed to focus on alleged North Korean Scud missile sales in the Mideast.

South Korea's plans to buy sophisticated Israeli weapons and military know-how also were believed to be high on the agenda.

Neither side would give details of the discussions and would not even say how many people were in the Israeli delegation, which was believed to be the largest to visit South Korea in recent years.

A brief news release from the Israeli embassy said only that a group led by Major General Eltan Ben-Eliah arrived Wednesday for "intensive" talks.

It met Thursday with Assistant Defence Minister Park Yong-Ok and was to visit the South Korean army headquarters south of Seoul on Friday.

One of Israel's major concerns is alleged North Korean sales of long-range Scud missiles to Iran and Syria, Israel's traditional enemies.

Israel is reportedly seeking U.S. and South Korean help to halt the sales.

During his visit to Seoul in 1994, then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin repeatedly denounced North Korea for peddling Scud missiles in the Mideast.

The North's Scuds are also a matter of grave concern for South Korea, since the entire country is within their range. Seoul is only 56 kilometres from the world's most heavily armed border.

The CIA disclosed in 1994 that North Korea had successfully tested a Scud-based surface-to-surface missile, called Nodong 1, with an estimated range of 1,000 kilometres.

South Korea recently announced a long-term programme to build up its military to cope with what it sees as increasing military threats from its communist rival.

Despite its economic plight, hard-line North Korea reportedly spends a quarter of its gross national product on its 1.2-million-strong military, already the world's fifth-largest.

South Korean officials fear

that North Korea, reportedly facing famine after massive floods last summer, may resort to military adventurism to divert attention from domestic problems.

South Korea last week disclosed plans to buy \$30 billion worth of sophisticated weapons, including two AWACS early-warning planes and advanced missile systems, over five years starting in 1997.

South Korean officials indicated the United States, their traditional arms provider, would not be the source of all the weaponry. Seoul recently has spread its purchases to other countries, including Russian high-tech weapons as part of a loan repayment deal.

Last week, South Korea officials said they were close to final approval of a \$32.5 million purchase of Israeli-made unmanned attack planes.

The plan calls for South Korea to buy an unspecified number of the remotely piloted vehicles, or RPVs, over three years from 1997.

Recent strides toward

Israel denies giving China jet fighters technology

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel on Friday denied giving China technology for an advanced jet fighter developed in cooperation with the United States after Washington demanded an explanation following reports of a deal.

"Israel obeys and will continue to obey laws and requirements which stipulate U.S. authorisation for exports involving American technology or parts," the Israeli defence ministry said in a statement.

The statement was in response to U.S. press reports that Israel had transferred to China technology for the Lavi fighter-bomber, a sophisticated jet fighter that Israel and the United States developed jointly in the 1980s.

U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said Wednesday that Washington was taking the reports seriously and seeking clarification from Israel.

Foreign governments are normally required to obtain prior authorisation from the United States for transfers of U.S.-developed technology.

The Lavi, also known as Super Kfir or Arye, was approved in 1980 and designed to provide close air support and air-to-air defence to the Israeli Air Force using technology developed largely in the United States — including advanced computerised avionics.

The Israeli government later aborted the project amid political and financial difficulties, according to Jane's defence publication.

China also denied the reports on Thursday.

peace in the Mideast led since on Arab oil had caused South Korea improve ties with Israel. Heavy depend-

War-wrecked museum opens for symbolic glimpse

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon's war-wrecked museum has opened its doors for the first time in 20 years to give a select public a glimpse of the fruits of months of restoration work.

Officials, diplomats and other guests were shown the museum's new facade and 94 monumental pieces — including the 13th century B.C. sarcophagus of the Phoenician King Ahiram, ancient statues and mosaics — which had been cast in armoured cement for protection.

Visitors also viewed graffiti scrawled on the interior walls by the fighters who occupied the museum during the 1975-1990 civil war. Culture Minister Michel Eddé hosted the symbolic ceremony on Thursday. The museum opens formally at the end of 1996.

The work to rebuild the

stone facade — which served as target practice and a shooting range for the warring parties during the war — took seven months and cost \$800,000. It involved patching up gaps and holes.

Workers also toiled for one month to remove the monumental pieces from their casts.

The Antiquities Department plans on launching an international competition to rehabilitate displays and set up security systems after restoring the interior of the building, its chairman Camille Asmar said.

A plethora of archaeological objects spanning several civilisations which have been found in the war-devastated city centre of Beirut will also be displayed in the museum.

At the start of the civil war, Mr. Asmar's prede-

cessor, Maurice Chehab, transferred small pieces from the museum for safekeeping to the vaults of the Lebanese central bank, and removed others to warehouses.

Large pieces were kept in their place but cast in armoured cement to ensure that they would not be removed by foreign and Lebanese combatants who fought in the war.

However, many antiquities were stolen from Lebanon during the war despite the efforts of officials.

The government has launched a campaign since the end of the war to retrieve the stolen pieces and late last year the independent An Nahar newspaper invited the public to help by subscribing to a special fund to retrieve stolen pieces from the international market.

Poll: Women may be swing vote in Israeli elections

JERUSALEM (AP) — Women may be the swing vote in Israeli elections for prime minister, favouring Prime Minister Shimon Peres over opposition contender Benjamin Netanyahu by 15 per cent, a public opinion poll indicated Friday.

Two separate polls published Friday indicated Mr. Peres would win the election for prime minister if they were held today.

In a Gallup poll published in the daily Maariv Friday, 46.2 per cent of the women surveyed favoured Mr. Peres, while 31.8 per cent of the women preferred Mr. Netanyahu, head of the opposition Likud Party. Men, however, preferred Mr. Netanyahu 38.5 per cent, to 37.3 per cent in favour of Mr. Peres.

According to 1994 population statistics tallied by the Central Bureau of Statistics, women in Israel outnumber men by close to 100,000. Population projections for 1998 indicated a similar gap.

The Gallup survey indicated that if elections were held today, Mr. Peres would receive 42.45 per cent of the national vote, while Mr. Netanyahu would come in second with 34.8 per cent of the vote.

A Dohat Institute poll, published Friday in the daily Yediot Aharanot, indicated that 50 per cent of the public would choose Mr. Peres as prime minister if elections were held now, while 29 per cent would vote for Mr. Netanyahu.

Both polls questioned 515 people and had a margin of error of four per cent.

Arrests raise questions for Palestinians in self-rule areas

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Human rights activists and candidates for a new Palestinian council voiced fears Thursday about the future of democracy under self-rule after a series of arrests targeting critics of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

"These people made the Palestinian authority angry so they were arrested," said Raji Sourani, head of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights in Gaza City.

"This is now almost a systematic thing," he said. "Unfortunately we do not yet have a state, but there is a serious attempt to suppress freedom of expression."

His comments came hours after Bassem Eid, a leading Palestinian human rights worker from East Jerusalem, was freed after being held for a day by Palestinian security forces in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Security sources quoted in the Palestinian An Nahar newspaper Thursday said Mr. Eid was arrested for actions that "provoked conflict between various segments of the Palestinian people."

B'tselem, the Israeli rights group for which Mr. Eid works, linked his arrest to Mr. Eid's criticism of Mr. Arafat's authority, including a report in August that first drew attention to abuses by Palestinian security forces.

Mr. Eid was detained shortly after newspaper

editor Maher Alami was held for six days as punishment for ignoring instructions to run a laudatory Christmas day story about Mr. Arafat on his newspaper's front page.

Last month, Iyad Sarraj, the head of the Palestinian Independent Commission on Citizens Rights, was also detained by security forces in Gaza City.

"We are living in a contradiction," said Mr. Sourani, who supports a left-wing opposition faction and was himself arrested last February for opposing the introduction of state security courts dispensing summary justice in the Gaza Strip.

"We are talking about elections as part of the democratic process but at the same time, the environment is unhealthy," he said. "At least during elections freedom of expression should be clear and publicly practised," he said.

Marwan Kanafani, a former spokesman for Mr. Arafat who resigned to run in the elections, insisted there was no policy to arrest critics of Mr. Arafat's executive.

But he added that the authority had a duty to protect Palestinian unity as Palestinians seek to establish their state.

The authority "should be extremely careful about arresting people, but it has a duty now to preempt any individual or collective attempt to destabilise the society at this critical time."

"I know the head of the authority is a democratic man," Mr. Kanafani said. "Sometimes he is under stress and under the influence of shaping the authority but once we have a mechanism to check and balance, then things will be better."

B'tselem called Mr. Eid's detention "a blatant example of a pattern that is increasing, in which the Palestinian authority chooses to silence its critics rather than addressing them."

The arrests have overlapped with another campaign, that for elections to the 88-member council of representatives from the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem which in principle will have the task of acting as a check on executive power in the Palestinian authority.

A small number of candidates took up the issue as proof of the need to elect independent-minded representatives.

"Anyone ready to defend human rights is facing difficult times," said Abdul Jawad Salah, an independent candidate from Ramallah.

"I was a member of the executive committee of the PLO and I know these people well. They are not democratic by nature," he said. Mr. Salah said he hoped the elections would create a council that could prevent arrests in the future. "We are going to try to change all of this," he added.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:30 Moonlight (cartoon)

14:30 Harry and the Hendersons

14:30 Blue Heelers

14:30 Only in Hollywood

14:30 I Love Lucy (Comedy)

14:30 Sky Trackers

17:30 Children's Programme: C'est Pas Sorcier

17:30 Magazine — Omnisciences

19:00 Drama — C'est Mon Histoire

19:00 Le Journal

19:15 Magazine — Faut Pas Réver

19:30 News Headlines

19:35 Major Dads

20:00 Doc — The Stamp of Greatness

20:25 The Bold and The Beautiful

21:10 Star Trek

22:25 News in English

22:30 Feature Film: "Deadly Medicine"

23:50 Series — Behaving Badly

PRAYER TIMES

05:00 Fajr

06:30 Sunrise/Duha

11:30 Dhuhur

14:22 'Asr

16:45 Maghreb

18:07 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Switzerland, Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terranova Church Tel. 622366

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 625441

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Armenian International Church Tel. 652526

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

The Kingdom is affected by a

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

cold front. It will be rain windy and stormy. Winds will be moderate to active. In Agaba, it will be partly cloudy and seas choppy. Winds will be southwesterly moderate.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman 5/12

Aqaba 10/21

Deserts 4/13

Jordan Valley 10/21

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 12 Agaba 23, Humidity

readings: Amman 33 per cent,

Aqaba 39 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Mukhlis Mazharah 820425

Dr. Salman Al Daboubi 776751

Dr. Ramzi Mawazi 894788

Dr. Khalid M'addi 743500

Firas pharmacy 661912

Ferdows pharmacy 778336

Al Asema pharmacy 637055

Nairookh pharmacy 623672

Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shimacani pharmacy 637680

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qusu 281741

Akquds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Akram Haddad 985550

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Emergency 630841

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 845402

Traffic Police 980390

Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water and Sewerage 661176

Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality 787111

Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010630

Central Amman Telephone

Repairs 623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Int'l. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 642816

Akileh Maternity, J. Amn 643441/2

King chairs meeting of panel on ties with EU

AMMAN (Petra)— His Majesty King Hussein Thursday chaired a meeting of the Higher National Committee in charge of holding talks on regional cooperation with the European Union (EU).

King Hussein stressed the importance of building strong economic, political, cultural and social relations with the world, saying that such regional and economic cooperation has an important role in strengthening the foundations of stability in the region and the world at large.

The meeting was attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, His Royal Highness Prince Hamzah Bin Al Hussein and Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Bin Shaker.

Prince Hassan briefed the meeting on his views of the bases of a Jordanian-European partnership and reviewed the political, economic, security and social aspects on which this partnership will be based. Prince Hassan praised the government's performance during the previous rounds of talks with the EU, which started in July 1995. He lauded the government's efforts to ensure an active role for the private sector in the negotiations with the EU.

Sharif Zeid reviewed progress of negotiations between the Jordanian government and the EU. The Prime Minister expressed the government's interest in reaching a Jordanian-EU agreement serving Jordan's national interests, particularly in the economic field and ensuring balanced relations capable of creating the right climate for Jordanian industries to compete in the European market. Sharif Zeid also reviewed the government's efforts to follow up on studies for regional economic projects, including water and Jordan Rift Valley projects.

The committee comprises Royal Court Chief Marwan Al Qasem, Ministers of Finance, Foreign Affairs, Industry and Trade, Transport, Water and Irrigation and Planning, as well as the economic secretary at the Prime Ministry Basem Awadallah.



PRAYING FOR RAIN: His Majesty King Hussein Thursday joins other worshippers in a prayer for rain in Marj Al Hamam district near Amman (Reuters photo)

Scattered showers expected

AMMAN (J. T.) — The Department of Meteorology said Friday that Jordan will today remain under the influence of a low depression centred west of Cyprus and scattered rain will fall in most regions of the Kingdom.

A department spokesman told the Jordan Times that the depression, which was accompanied by a cold front that brought rain in the past two days, was moving steadily towards the east, noting that the front will cause temperatures to drop to five degrees centigrade at night and rise to a maximum of 11 degrees during the day on Saturday.

The rains in the past two days followed a long stretch of dry and cold weather that lasted through most of December.

The Department of Meteorology said that this season's rainfall so far was 20 per cent below the annual average.

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A 31-year-old woman from the district of Abu Alanda near Amman stabbed to death by her brother Thursday for allegedly having an affair with a man, according to official sources.

Amal A.B., received several stabs in the back and head by her brother, identified only as Ahmad A. S., 22, who surrendered to police shortly after the murder, an official source told the Jordan Times.

Man stabs his sister to death

Amal's body was taken to Al Bashir Hospital where she was declared dead on arrival.

The source, who preferred not to be identified, said that Ahmad told police that he killed his married sister "because he received information that she had an affair with someone."

"Ahmad became angry upon learning of the oews and stabbed his sister, without investigating the story," the official source said, adding that Amal's husband was at work at the time of the incident.

According to the source, preliminary investigation indicated that there was no

Jordanian employees at U.S. embassy to work without pay due to shutdown

by Amy Henderson
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanian workers at the U.S. embassy in Amman will continue to work, albeit without pay for the time being, as the United States government enters its third week of partial shutdown today.

According to a U.S. embassy official in Amman, Jordanian embassy staff will continue to work because it is illegal to furlough Jordanian workers according to Jordan's labour law. However, the government shutdown in the U.S. will not permit these workers to be paid until the American Congress agrees on a budget and passes an appropriations bill.

"Jordanians will be paid a half pay check (for the second pay period in December)," the official said, "but after Dec. 15, there is no money (to pay their salaries) because there is no budget."

The U.S. government has a two-week pay period scheme, he explained, and because the shutdown commenced one week into the pay period, workers will only be paid for half the two-week period, which expired Dec. 23.

The official could not give precise statistics about the number of Jordanian

employees at the embassy, but estimated that there may be approximately 300 Jordanian employees who would be affected by the U.S. congressional battle for the budget and the ensuing shutdown.

The embassy official added that Jordanians should be assured that they will eventually be paid for their service during the shutdown as it is customary that Congress votes for a retroactive resolution which pays for people who worked during a period of shutdown. "We tend to believe that this will be the case in this instance," the official said. "There may be no paychecks during the next pay-day, but at the end of the month (for example) employees might be paid for two and a half pay periods. Eventually, the money comes through."

"The problem," he said, "is for those people who are living paycheck to paycheck."

Deputy director of the office of management and budget John Kokinen called the shutdown a "serious problem" earlier this week, saying that the "problem we're concerned with abroad is the fact that we do not have the funds, not only to pay American nationals, we do not have funds to pay foreign service nationals who work for our embassies...who provide

security either for embassies or personnel."

The government shutdown, the longest in U.S. history, has also had ramifications for foreign students studying at American universities and travellers, American and foreign alike. Under terms of the shutdown, which has furloughed nearly three-quarter million U.S. government employees, government agencies are instructed to perform only emergency functions, which dictates, essentially, that the State Department and its consulates world-wide are forbidden to issue passports or visas except in emergency cases.

An American official addressing the press three days ago in Washington D.C. said that issuing visas "is not a function which can operate without appropriations...so Congress has told the agencies and particularly the state department, 'do not issue passports or visas except in emergency cases. And that's what's happening right now.'"

The embassy official said that according to statistics from the International Exchange of Scholars, some 5,000 Jordanian students study in the U.S., 90 per cent of whom have multiple entry visas. Of the remaining ten per cent, he said, he did not know how

many would be affected by the shutdown as foreign students, on Christmas holiday, prepare to return to classes.

"People on furlough cannot by law work," he said. "For the consular to issue a visa would be in violation of the law. It's extremely unfortunate but that's where we stand."

An embassy employee in Amman told the Jordan Times that the embassy is trying to help employees compensate for the interruption in salaries by allowing them to take a loan from what is called the "providence fund."

"They are trying to help, but we know that this is beyond their control," the employee said. "It is a problem for some employees but the bigger fear is what will happen after a congressional budget agreement; people are worried about their jobs."

The U.S. constitution requires that Congress pass an appropriation before the government incurs any (financial) obligations. Only 15 years ago did the U.S. witness its first shutdown in the context of a budget debate, and since then, there have been several, usually falling on weekends or holidays, and rarely lasting for more than one or two days.

Meeting to prepare for Afro-Arab dialogue conference

AMMAN (J.T.) — An Arab-African committee will meet here Sunday, to prepare for the general Afro-Arab Dialogue Conference which will start Monday in Amman with the participation of lawmakers from a number of Arab and African countries.

Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Sa'd Hayel Srour said the conference, which is held every two years, is bound to bolster Arab-African parliamentary ties.

The two-day conference "will be an opportunity to promote bilateral cooperation and dialogue for the benefit of the Arab and African states," added Mr. Srour.

According to Mr. Srour, who will chair the conference, the participants will discuss ways for stemming the spread of nuclear and other mass destruction weapons, the role of Arab and African parliaments in promoting regional development and defusing disputes between African and



Sa'd Hayel Srour

Arab nations.

Mr. Srour said that invitations for the conference were sent out to all African and Arab parliaments, expressing hope that all invitees will attend.

He also noted that following the conference, the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) will hold an emergency meeting upon Jordan's request to discuss a recent decision by the US congress to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Seguin arrives Sunday

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The speaker of the French National Assembly, Philippe Seguin, will arrive here Saturday for a two-day visit to the Kingdom where he will hold talks with parliamentarians on bilateral relations and development in the peace process, a French Embassy spokesman has said.

"Mr. Seguin's visit is aimed at showing France's support for the peace process in the region and democratisation steps in the Kingdom," the spokesman said.

Speaker of the Lower House Sa'd Hayel Srour said Mr. Seguin, who will visit Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas, will address Parliament on Saturday on Arab-European dialogue.

Mr. Seguin is expected to meet with His Majesty King Hussein, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and members of the Foreign Affairs Committee at the House.

Witness dismissed at request of defence lawyer

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Attorneys for Muslim activist Atta Abu Rishteh, who is accused of slandering His Majesty King Hussein in a newspaper interview last October, Thursday requested that the state prosecutor be called to testify to his trial.

Mr. Abu Rishteh, spokesman of the illegal Hezb Al Tahrir (Liberation party), was apprehended by authorities on Oct. 15, nine days after he was interviewed by Al Hiwar weekly. He is also charged with belonging to an illegal organisation.

Abdul Fatah Lafi, one of the two defence attorneys in the Abu Rishteh case, requested that State Prosecutor Major Mahmoud Obeidat, who questioned Mr. Abu Rishteh when he was arrested in October, testify before the court. The defence contest that the charges against Mr. Abu Rishteh were read out without an attorney present because his client was denied access to a telephone to contact a lawyer when he was detained.

Presiding Judge Hafez Amin rejected the defence's request, stating that Maj. Obeidat had fulfilled his responsibility by informing

Mr. Abu Rishteh of his right to an attorney.

The court heeded a defence request to dismiss witness Ahla Zuhair of the Legal Department at the Ministry of Information. The defence made the request on the grounds that her duties at the department do not qualify her to pass a technical judgement on the charges of which his client is accused.

Mr. Lafi had earlier asked the court to call Munjid Namarat, Al Hiwar reporter who interviewed Mr. Abu Rishteh, to the stand but Mr. Namarat has thus far failed to appear in court. Judge Amin subpoenaed

Mr. Namarat to appear at the next court session on Jan. 8.

'Islamic Revivalists' case postponed

Also Thursday, the State Security Court postponed until Jan. 7 the trial of six defendants known as the "Islamic Revivalists" accused of sabotage, because one of four lawyers defending the group, was ill.

The group, which pleaded not guilty, is charged with planning to carry out attacks against foreigners in Jordan, illegal possession and manufacturing of explosive materials and belonging to an illegal organisation.

Budget clears House after compromise

(Continued from page 1)

In his reply, the prime minister said the government took several steps to provide basic commodities to the consumer and to maintain prices at the same level even when they were changed internationally.

The price of wheat increased by 80 per cent, sugar 12 per cent, rice 51 per cent and milk 42.7 per cent," he said.

"With due respect to the role of deputies and the pressures that they face... we should avoid generalisations. There are several channels to resort to in order to solve problems. This is not the right way to work together in attempts to rectify wrong decisions or to restore a right to the people."

In a tacit reference to a remark made by deputy Faisal, in which he criticised the organisation of a seminar on corruption last month, and claimed that it was organised to convince the West of the need to continue providing aid to Jordan, the prime minister said the government had serious intentions to fight corruption.

"Fighting corruption cannot be done by talk only," he said. "It is through finding the proper means and taking legal action against any one found guilty that corruption is eliminated, he said. "But the most disheartening thing is to slander the government when it holds specialised seminars to fight corruption. We

in the government are proud that we were never reluctant to take deterrent measures against corruption, but we don't go around and accuse people (of corruption) without having proof."

The prime minister said the government was exerting considerable efforts to lessen poverty and solve unemployment estimated at 15 per cent. But he said that solving the problem necessitated a national effort.

"Economic indicators show there is steady growth in the national economy which will be reflected in the creation of more jobs," he said. "But, solving unemployment necessitates national effort."

He said that the government was aiming at ensuring equality in privileges between the private and public sectors to encourage Jordanians to work for the private sector. Around 37 per cent of the labour force in Jordan works in government.

The government also replied to another criticism made by the leader of the National Action Front bloc Abdul Hadi Majali, who cast doubts over government figures and plans for increasing the foreign currency reserves in the Kingdom.

"How will foreign currency reserves be increased to \$920 million by the end of this year while at present the net reserve does not exceed \$450 million?" Mr. Majali asked.

Mr. Jandaneh said that that was possible. "The deficit in the current account of the balance of payments is decreasing and it is not going to exceed 3.5 per cent of the GNP," he pointed out. "Also contributing to the reduction in deficit is a noticeable improvement in national products and the rise in collected revenues in the tourist sector which will reach \$791 million this year."

"In addition, the government will get foreign loans with suitable terms to support the foreign currency reserves," he added.

The government strongly brushed aside criticism by Islamist deputies. In most of their speeches, Islamic Action Front deputies accused the government of adopting policies that served Zionist ambitions in the region. They charged that Jordan was following directives from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

IAF deputy Hammam Sa'ed said: "The need for social and psychological security has not been fulfilled. The citizen is subject to repression and oppression. While treaties have been signed with the Jewish enemy, arrests and suppression of the opposition are increasing. These treaties with the Jewish enemy are putting our economy in the hands of the unknown and leading our industrial and commercial sectors into God knows where."

"These policies are applied by the government... the banks condition financing Jordanian projects on Israel being partner."

In his reply, Sharif Zeid said: "Our programme is a national one that meets our aspirations. We cooperate with international bodies and friendly countries to achieve our goals. (But) our policies are not dictated by any one."

Mr. Jandaneh also explained that the government's policies were aimed at maintaining a balance between local revenues and government's spending. He said that the draft budget meets Jordan's needs and realises self-reliance and is expected to boost national savings.

Outlining the government's objectives, the finance minister said the government aimed at transferring public corporations into shareholding companies. He said some government activities will also be transferred to the private sector in full.

The government also gave assurances that the scope of assistance to the poor and needy will not decrease. While deputies concentrated in their speeches on the need for health coverage of all Jordanians, the prime minister pointed out that there were around 83 per cent of Jordanians who were covered by health insurance schemes and that the government was taking the appropriate measures to expand the circle of beneficiaries.

The government "has opened

Prince Hassan, Princess Sarvath begin European tour

AMMAN (Petra)— His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath Thursday left Amman for the United Kingdom on the first leg of a three-country tour that will also take them to France and Belgium. Prince Hassan will hold talks with officials in the three countries on means of enhancing bilateral relations between Jordan and each of these three countries, in addition to Jordan's relations with the European Union. Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath were seen off at the airport by His Majesty King Hussein, Royal Family members, Speaker of the Upper House of Parliament, Royal Court Chief and senior civil and military officials.

Japanese delegation arrives

AMMAN (Petra)— A Specialised Japanese delegation arrives here today on a three-week visit to Jordan, during which it will hold talks with senior Jordanian officials on carrying out a preliminary study on the restoration and renovation of the King Hussein bridge on the River Jordan and constructing Sheikh Hussein bridge.

196 government tenders offered in 1995

AMMAN (Petra)—The Tenders Department last year offered 196 contracts worth JD 151,535,340 to carry out construction projects, feasibility studies and supervisory services in various parts of the country, according to the Tenders Department sources. The contracts included, among other things, the construction of government buildings, improving or renovating existing buildings and maintenance of roads.

UNICEF new director assumes duties

AMMAN (J.T.) — Farid Rahman has assumed his duties as Regional Director of the Amman-based UNICEF Middle East and North Africa (MENARO) Regional Office, succeeding Sarojini Vittachi, who retired on Nov. 30. Prior to his appointment to this post Mr. Rahman served as UNICEF Representative in Beijing. Before that, he was UNICEF Representative in Sudan and Deputy Regional Director of MENARO in Amman.

Russian foreign minister resigns amid hardliners' pressure

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev resigned Friday after months of pressure from hardliners, but the Kremlin said that there would be no major shift in foreign policy.

President Boris Yeltsin signed a decree accepting Mr. Kozyrev's resignation, but did not name a successor, the Kremlin press office told AFP.

Mr. Kozyrev's departure had been expected for some time due to mounting pressure from Communist and hardline nationalist forces over his generally pro-western policies.

However, presidential spokesman Sergei Medvedev said that "western countries should not take the resignation of

Andrei Kozyrev from foreign minister as a threat and a sign of a change in Russia's foreign policy."

"Steps will be taken aimed at strengthening partnership and mutual trust between Russia and other countries," he was quoted as saying by Interfax news agency.

The official reason given in the decree was to allow Kozyrev, who had served in the post since 1990, to take up the seat in the lower house of parliament, the state Duma, that he won in the Dec. 17 elections, a spokesman said.

Under the Russian constitution, ministers who win parliamentary seats must choose between the two posts.

However, Mr. Kozyrev,

44, had come under increasing criticism both from hardliners and Kremlin officials who saw him as ineffective.

In October Mr. Yeltsin publicly criticised the foreign ministry's performance.

The Communist Party's big victory in the parliamentary elections sealed Mr. Kozyrev's fate, with party leader Gennady Zyuganov calling for the "immediate resignation" of the minister.

Possible successors to Mr. Kozyrev are believed to include Vladimir Lukin, 58, a former ambassador to the United States, who headed the Duma's Foreign Affairs Commission, Yuri Vorontsov, 66, the current ambassador to Washington,

counter-intelligence service chief Yevgeny Primakov, 65, and Anatoly Adamishin, 61, the ambassador to Britain.

Observers said that Mr. Yeltsin was likely to name an uncontroversial successor who would not create waves ahead of his as yet unannounced reelection bid in June.

"With six months to go before the elections the president is not going to change policy, but will put someone from the administration into Mr. Kozyrev's place," said Vladimir Averchev, a parliamentary deputy from the liberal Yabloko Party and a former secretary of the Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee.



U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry (left), Ukraine Defence Minister Valery Shmarov (centre) and their Russian counterpart Pavel Grachev shake hands after their meeting on the destruction of a strategic rockets silo (AFP photo)

U.S., Russia, Ukraine ministers destroy missile

KIEV (R) — The defence ministers of the United States, Ukraine and Russia undertook a post-cold war task Friday by flying to a military missile base to destroy a silo which once housed Soviet missiles aimed at American targets.

William Perry, Valery Shmarov and Pavel Grachev, who held unusual three-cornered talks in Kiev Thursday, will simultaneously push buttons to blow up the silo in Pervomaisk, about 300 km south of the capital.

The silo once held a six-warhead SS-19 missile — from among the 1,900 warheads which Ukraine is sending to Russia for destruction under a 1994 accord in exchange for about \$1 billion in fuel for Ukraine's nuclear power stations.

Mr. Perry Thursday said the demolition of silo No. 110, site no. 673, amounted to "turning the place back into a wheat field". He said he looked forward to returning later in the year to see the area ploughed under.

The secretary has been an active proponent of financial assistance to Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan — in the face of opposition from conservatives in congress — to enable the former Soviet republics to become nuclear-free.

Mr. Perry describes the process as "defence by other means".

Mr. Shmarov told reporters Ukraine was fulfilling the 1994 accord. He said just over a third of more than 60 silos in Ukraine were due for destruction under the pact and studies were being undertaken to convert the others to peaceful use.

The talks Thursday, later joined by Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, reflected improved relations between Ukraine and Russia, though the neighbours remain at odds on how to divide the former Soviet Black Sea fleet.

Mr. Grachev adopted a combative position before the meeting, restating Russian objections to NATO's eastward expansion. The Kremlin, he told officers at a military academy, would have to reexamine its obligations under international treaties and the "role and place of tactical nuclear weapons".

But Mr. Kuchma told reporters the discussions had gone well. All three sides agreed to take part in joint military exercises in western Ukraine later this year, joined perhaps by troops from across the border in Poland.

"I would like to inform you that relations between

Ukraine and Russia have become much better during the recent period," Mr. Kuchma said after the talks in his Mariinsky Palace.

Mr. Grachev said Russia would soon propose extending the 1992 agreement on joint control with Ukraine of the Black Sea fleet. Ownership of the fleet is the sole issue delaying signature of a friendship treaty four years after the collapse of communism.

Mr. Perry and Mr. Kuchma also discussed the NATO-led operation to implement a peace accord in Bosnia. The United States is to provide about a third of the 60,000-man force, Russia some 1,500 men and Ukraine about 550 peacekeepers.

Cash shortages had put Ukraine's participation in doubt last week as the year-end deadline for advising NATO came to a close. The former Soviet republic sees the mission as prestigious and is seeking help from other countries.

"Ukraine has expressed its wish to take part in these operations," Mr. Kuchma said. "I asked our honorable guest (Mr. Perry) to support Ukraine in this endeavour."

Mr. Perry replied that he was looking forward to both Ukraine and Russia taking part in the mission.

Britain's Clarke wraps up "affectionate" Argentina trip

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — British Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke ended a three-day trip to Argentina Thursday that may help boost British investment here in line with the post-Falklands war diplomatic thaw.

Mr. Clarke, who travelled with a delegation of business executives, signed oil and fishing permits as well as agreements to prevent tax fraud and double taxation for businesses operating in the two countries.

He also signed agreements on steps towards closer trade ties between the European Union and the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), which includes South American neighbours Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay.

Relations between Argentina and Britain have been improving slowly since fighting a brief but bloody war 13 years ago over the Falkland Islands, known here as the Malvinas.

Britain controls the nearby south Atlantic islands, which Argentina says were stolen 163 years ago.

Asked about the tone of the talks, Foreign Minister Guido di Tella said: "When we make friends, we do it totally. We became almost affectionate, that is why we want more investment."

Mr. di Tella described Mr. Clarke as a "minister from a friendly country."

The British official also

met with President Carlos Menem and Finance Minister Domingo Cavallo. Despite some lingering ill feelings over the war, Britain ranks fourth among Argentina's European investors, after Spain, Italy and France.

In 1995, British sales to Argentina rose by 7.5 per cent to \$210 million while purchases shot up 48 per cent to \$199 million.

Mr. Clarke left Friday for Chile. His south American tour also included Brazil.

British businesses are particularly interested in snapping up the few remaining Argentine government monopolies that the Menem administration is privatising to cut the government budget deficit.

Two big privatisations coming up are water supplies to rural Argentina and a massive hydroelectric plant at Yacireta which it shares with neighbouring Paraguay.

Mr. Clarke, for his part, was particularly pleased with the signing of an agreement allowing joint exploration and drilling for crude oil and natural gas off the Falklands.

He also acknowledged Argentina's concern over overfishing of waters off its coast.

Argentina is planning to license drilling west of the Falklands that border the British-held zone. The area up for licensing is 55,000 square kilometres.

Analysts have described the drilling as being of moderate to high risk.

Mr. Clarke's Thursday events here include a meeting with Julio Macchi, president of the stock market, and lunch with the British-Argentine Chamber of Commerce.

On Dec. 15, the European Union, of which Britain is a member, and Mercosur signed a landmark cooperation agreement designed to pave the way for a huge trans-Atlantic free trade accord.

The deal between the 15-nation European Union and Mercosur included no immediate trade liberalisation measures or EU aid to Mercosur. But it marked the first "such economic and political cooperation agreement between two regional customs unions."

Mercosur took effect Jan. 1, 1995, and with a combined population of 195 million people, it is a sprawling economic powerhouse that hopes to grow stronger by taking in more members.

In 1992 it was the world's fourth largest economic power in terms of gross domestic product, and in 1994 had a combined GDP of \$715 billion.

The European Union is Mercosur's main trade partner, buying up 27 per cent of southern cone exports in 1994, according to the International Monetary Fund.

Speak out on EU, former president tells Chirac

PARIS (AFP) — One of Jacques Chirac's conservative predecessors in the French presidency Thursday called on him to explain more clearly his policies on the European Union.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who held the presidency from 1974 to 1981 and is strongly in favour of closer EU integration, said during a television interview that Mr. Chirac should hold "his first major press conference" to explain his policies to the French people.

Mr. Giscard d'Estaing said that Mr. Chirac's recently announced aim of reducing France's public sector deficit, rather than fighting unemployment and boosting living standards, was not a policy on its own.

"We have to build Europe, but one has to be very careful how one goes about that," he said. "Cutting deficits, if one does nothing else, will not solve the other problems we have, which are jobs and growth," he added.

"We therefore have to have a global strategy, in addition to cutting deficits," he said.

"I therefore wish, and I strongly insist, that the president should take the initiative... to explain to the French and to others the French project for a European Union," he said.

Mr. Chirac, who was elected in May on promises to simultaneously reduce deficits, increase purchasing power and cut unemployment, has stayed mainly silent over the past two months, as France has lived through its worst wave of strikes in a generation.

Most of the criticism has been borne by his prime minister, Alain Juppé, who sparked the wave of unrest by introducing unpopular measures to reform health care and retirement schemes, and also to cut losses on the state railways.

The social unrest has undermined the difficulty of persuading French workers to accept the kind of austerity which is seen as necessary if the country is to fulfil criteria for membership of a common EU currency by the end of the century.

Zaire, UNHCR resume talks on closing Rwandan refugee camps

KINSHASA (AFP) — Zairean government officials and representatives of the U.N. refugee agency went into a second day of talks here Friday on starting to repatriate more than a million Rwandan refugees in the next few weeks.

A source close to the talks said Zairean officials Thursday spent their concern to see the closure of camps in the Lake Goma area on the border get under way within the next fortnight.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is expected to contact the Rwandan government with details of the closure schedule, but officials here would not disclose practical aspects of the operation.

Most of the refugees in camps around the east Zairean towns of Goma and Bukavu are members of Rwanda's Hutu majority, fearful of returning to their small central African country after ethnic carnage in 1994.

The goal was "to proceed with precaution and without rushing things", a source close to the meeting said.

The talks follow discussions in Geneva on Dec. 20 among Zairean and Rwandan officials and the UNHCR.

Zaire that month withdrew a decision to

expel the refugees by the end of the year, but on Dec. 28 a UNHCR official in Geneva said that some camps housing more than 200,000 people will be closed in the coming two months.

The decision to close the camps, which have caused friction between Rwandans and local people and seen violence and has drawn sharp criticism from the opposition rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy in Rwanda (RDR).

On Jan. 2, in a statement published in Nairobi, the Hutu RDR accused the UNHCR of drawing up a plan for the closure of camps, who fled as and after former rebels of the Tutsi minority won a genocidal civil war in July 1994.

The RDR also denounced the arrest of Hutu leaders in Goma camps. Zairean authorities say that a number of people have been detained for trouble-making and intimidation of fellow refugees.

According to the RDR, the solution to the problem can come only through a major reform of the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan administration established after the three months of bloodletting, in which about half a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were massacred by Hutu extremists.

S. African troops, police out in force for funeral

DURBAN, South Africa (R) — Troops and police backed by armoured vehicles will be out in force Saturday to guard against possible trouble at the funeral of 19 people killed by Zulu warriors in South Africa on Christmas day.

A police spokesman said Friday that 1,300 police and soldiers would be deployed in the Shobashobane area, near Port Shepstone, where 600 rampaging warriors

attacked ANC-supporting Zulu villagers.

The African National Congress (ANC) said Friday the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) had threatened to disrupt the funeral. Inkatha denied the allegations.

"The IFP has threatened to disrupt the funeral and to later dig up the bodies and chop them up," ANC south coast spokesman Ravi Pillay said.

official Themba Mthuli denied the party had threatened anyone or planned to disrupt the funeral.

"The IFP is not threatening anything. If there are those threats, they are coming from the communities there and not from the IFP," he said.

Mr. Pillay said however Inkatha officials had "also threatened to attack ANC members and leaders in other areas if the funeral goes ahead".

Candle blamed for Shenzhen factory fire

HONG KONG (AFP) — A young male worker who fell asleep while reading by candlelight was arrested for causing a factory fire in the booming special economic zone of Shenzhen that left 20 people dead, it was reported Friday. The migrant worker from Hunan province, identified only as Liu, 17, is expected to be charged by authorities after confessing that he caused the fire that destroyed a storehouse and a workers' dormitory belonging to Shengli Christmas Decorations (Shenzhen) Ltd. in Qingbu village on Jan. 1, the China-funded Ta Kung Pao daily said. The report said Liu fell asleep while reading by candlelight. He was awoken by the fire, but fled when he was unable to put it out. The number of fire victims rose to 20 after a male body was found pinned under a dormitory wall. The dead comprised seven men and 13 women, most of whom were factory workers asleep in the dormitory at the time of the blaze. Authorities were quoted as saying that most of the victims died during a stampede which resulted when some workers re-entering the dormitory to save their belongings collided in the narrow halls with those trying to escape. Ta Kung Pao, quoted authorities in Qingbu as saying that the factory, owned by Taiwanese interests, had been warned at least six times to improve its safety system, but the owners of the factory allegedly threatened to move out of the village if forced to comply.

Four held for smuggling women to China

HANOI (AFP) — Four men have been arrested in northern Vietnam for smuggling women into China to be sold as brides or prostitutes, a report has said. Four men led by an ethnic Chinese named as Che Pbo Sang recruited women in the south of Vietnam and lured them north with offers of jobs as waitresses, the Lao Dong newspaper said. Four women were taken to the border crossing at Mong Cai in northern Quang Ninh province but three escaped. The fourth woman was sold for 1.3 million dong (\$110); the report said. An estimated 5,000 Vietnamese women have been sold to neighbouring countries in the past five years. Many have been sold into prostitution in Taiwan, Macau and Cambodia, according to women's groups here. Southern China's growing wealth has boosted the human trade from Vietnam, where incomes are still significantly lower.

Japanese, U.S. astronomers to map universe

TOKYO (AFP) — Japanese astronomers will join their U.S. colleagues to compile a radical new three-dimensional map of the universe to include 100 million galaxies, some as far from Earth as 2.5 billion light years, Kyodo news service has said. Japanese participants include astronomers from the Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka national universities, and the National Astronomical Observatory, said Kyodo, quoting officials of the project. The new digital sky survey will measure the distances of the galaxies from Earth as an effort to improve humans' understanding of how the universe evolved, the officials were quoted as saying. The project will use a set of telescopes in the Sacramento Mountains, New Mexico, to survey a quarter of the sky, choosing some one million galaxies, out of the 100 million they expect to find and measuring their distance from Earth.

Urban unrest flares in Basque country

MADRID (AFP) — Urban unrest has flared markedly in Spain's Basque country as young radicals try to force the government to negotiate with the illegal separatist movement ETA on its claims to independence.

When security forces broke up an ETA armed group 10 days ago, young militants surfaced in several towns to raid ruling Socialist Party branch offices, banks and company premises.

They used firebombs in Hernani and Pamplona, and in Vitoria doused a bus driver with petrol. An overnight bomb explosion badly damaged a motor showroom for the French carmakers Peugeot near Pamplona.

Police had to disperse youths in Bilbao who were smashing store windows, and two people were injured there Sunday during a demonstration by more than 40,000 pro-independence sympathisers.

Police and local authorities blamed the vandalism on Jarrai, youth wing of Herri Batasuna (HB), held to be the political wing of the banned ETA. In regional elections in 1994, HB got 16 per cent of the vote.

Hernani's Mayor Jose Antonio Rekondo said Jarrai's behaviour was part of "a strategy to spread terror through the populace and force negotiations outside the mainstream of Basque wishes".

The determination to maintain an atmosphere of tension has been in evidence for some time in the counter-demonstrations

mounted when employees of kidnapped industrialist Jose Maria Aldaya gather each day to call for his release.

ETA kidnapped him eight months ago, and its supporters keep turning out to bait the Aldaya work force with threats and cries of "Long live ETA!"

The regional paper Diario Vasco quoted from a document issued by Kas, an organisation close to ETA, saying the tactic of striking at the state and "colossal mobilisation" of Basque youth would "put ETA in such a position of strength that it will be able to announce a truce and force the enemy" to enter into talks.

Basque regional government spokeswoman Maria Carmen Garmendia commented that Basque radicals were "busy provoking a serious situation of confrontation and pain".

Spain's Interior Minister Juan Alberto Belloch said earlier he was worried at the upsurge of urban unrest unleashed by hundreds of youths who could one day join ETA's armed ranks. He saw that development as the Basque country's fundamental problem.

ETA itself meanwhile last Sunday claimed responsibility for a wave of attacks in past weeks which have killed seven people and wounded many more.

It warned in a communiqué that "without recognition of the right to self-determination of Euzkadi Herria (the Basque country), the conflict will continue to show its bitterest features".

Seoul in dilemma over aid to North Korea's starving

SEOUL (AFP) — The head of South Korea's Red Cross said Friday his government was on the horns of a dilemma over rice aid to prevent hundreds of thousands from starving in North Korea, but that Red Cross aid would continue.

"The North Korean motive is to separate the government and the people of South Korea, so the government is facing a very difficult situation. For us too it is difficult," Kang Young-Hoon said.

Mr. Kang, a former South Korean prime minister, and president of the Korean National Red Cross (KNRC) said the KNRC had already shipped some \$4 million worth of aid — blankets, winter socks and noodles — to North Korea.

In addition, Mr. Kang told foreign correspondents here, the Red Cross aid would continue through the humanitarian "window" left open by the government, despite the halt in official government aid.

"The South Korean government, which shipped 150,000 tonnes of rice last year, is in a position of wanting to help as much as possible, that is why they allow aid through the window of the KNRC."

"They are eager to see as much (aid) shipped out as possible, but it is not just the flood, it is not just a malnutrition problem, there is the political consideration."

"(North Korea) continues to treat South Korea as if it didn't exist, and condemns the government as a puppet of the so-called American imperialists," Mr. Kang said. He added that the North Korean Red Cross had even refused to talk directly to the South Korean Red Cross.

The KNRC donations, he said, were sent unmarked and unacknowledged.

Mr. Kang was speaking days ahead of a visit to Seoul by U.S. presidential advisor Anthony Lake, who local press reports say will try to persuade South Korea to take a softer line and resume its rice aid, despite the North's churlishness.

His comments also came ahead of a meeting of South Korean, Japanese and U.S. experts in Honolulu Jan. 24-25, which foreign ministry officials told AFP will include a "brainstorming session" on the North Korean aid dilemma.

The Red Cross chief said the KNRC was dependent on the Federation of Red Cross Societies for estimates of the seriousness of the situation and found their estimates more credible than those of the World Food Programme (WFP).

The federation estimates some 100,000 North Koreans are homeless, 500,000 affected and 400,000 hectares of arable land destroyed, while the WFP has said it believes some two million children face starvation in winter temperatures of -10 degrees Celsius this winter and another 500,000 women are "at risk."

"But no one can be sure of the real situation in such a closed society — we don't have any way to verify," Mr. Kang said.

Dr. Koh Il-Dong, a respected expert on North Korean agriculture accompanying Mr. Kang, told the foreign press flatly that the "malnutrition problem in North Korea is really severe."

Mr. Koh, of the Korea Development Institute, a government think tank, said reports from defectors to northeast China had indicated "that a large number of North Koreans are crossing the Tumen and Yalu (border) rivers to get food."



Jeff Getty speaks to the press after his release from San Francisco Hospital (AFP photo)

AIDS patient with baboon transplant leaves hospital

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP)

— An AIDS patient who received a controversial transplant of baboon bone marrow cells three weeks ago was discharged from hospital Thursday in good condition, a hospital spokeswoman said.

Doctors said that Jeff Getty, 38, was healthy enough to leave San Francisco General Hospital, but stressed that it would take several weeks before they could determine whether his body had accepted the transplant.

Mr. Getty, who has carried the HIV virus that causes AIDS for more than 15 years and was diagnosed with the disease nine years ago, had fought for two years to receive the experimental transplant.

Smiling as he left the hospital, Mr. Getty expressed optimism that a cure would be found. "We know now there is the beginning of finally getting a solution,"

he told reporters.

The Dec. 14 transplant was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in August after lobbying by doctors at the University of California, San Francisco and the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania.

They hope the transplant from baboons, which have a natural resistance to the HIV virus, would boost his immune system against the disease.

Some doctors oppose the procedure on the grounds that, if used widely, it runs the risk of infecting humans with animal illnesses.

The operation has also provoked animal-rights activists who saw the baboons as being sacrificed to serve human ends.

Mr. Getty, an AIDS activist, has travelled to Mexico in search of treatments not available in the United States.

Seven Indian soldiers killed in Kashmir, strike cripples life

SRINAGAR, India (AFP)

— Seven Indian soldiers and eight Muslim militants, seven of them foreigners, were killed in a sudden upsurge of violence in strife-torn Kashmir, authorities said Friday.

Fourteen soldiers were also injured in fierce gunbattles and by landmines in the Kashmir Valley, which remained crippled for the second day running by a strike called by Muslim separatists.

Four army men and two militants, including one foreigner, were killed during a 20-hour gunbattle in the Gandherbal hills overlooking Srinagar, summer capital of the northern Indian state of Kashmir, officials said.

The firefight, which ended late Thursday, erupted when a group of Islamic mercenaries ambushed an army convoy, police said. Seven soldiers were injured, three of them seriously.

An army major and six foreign mercenaries were also killed late Thursday in a separate 12-hour gunbattle on the outskirts of Srinagar after the troops launched a combing operation, the police sources said.

A landmine planted by Muslim guerrillas blew up an army truck in the southern Kashmir district of Pulwama overnight, killing two soldiers and injuring seven.

Hundreds of mercenaries from such Islamic countries

such as Afghanistan and Pakistan are fighting alongside Kashmiri militants in a bid to secede the state from the Indian Union.

Indian officials say most of the recent fighting in Kashmir is being done by the foreign mercenaries, many of whom are known to be Afghan war veterans. Most local militant groups are said to be in disarray.

The spurt in violence came as the Kashmir Valley was paralysed Friday in response to a strike called by Muslim separatists to urge the United Nations to hold a plebiscite in the strife-torn Indian state.

Government offices, shops, businesses, banks, post offices, courts, and schools were closed in Srinagar and throughout the valley, police sources and residents said.

Srinagar's streets were mostly deserted, and civilian vehicles were off the roads across the Muslim-majority region, the sources said. Heavily-armed Indian troops patrolled this city of 800,000 people.

Friday's shutdown was sponsored by the Islamic Resistance Front which wants the disputed Himalayan territory to merge with Pakistan.

A U.N. resolution on Kashmir passed on Jan. 5, 1949 called on India to hold a referendum in the state, whose Hindu ruler chose the previous year to join the newly-independent Indian Union.

Japan's Murayama announces resignation

TOKYO (R) — Japan's Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama announced his resignation as premier Friday to make way for a new government under the current three-party coalition, but ruled out calling snap general elections.

"I have decided to resign today," a surprisingly confident Murayama told a news conference. "I thought it was time to renew the people (in government) and make a fresh start in the New Year." He said he made up his mind on Jan. 1.

Coalition officials said Mr. Murayama, 71, was aiming to allow the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the biggest coalition party headed by outspoken Trade Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, to take command at least until April as head of an interim government.

By April, parliament is expected to pass the 1996/97 budget. The new prime minister will also host a summit meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton in Tokyo, scheduled for April 16-18, a key diplomatic event for Japan.

But Mr. Murayama said he had not yet named Mr. Hashimoto, 58, as his successor. "I have never talked of handing the reins of power to anyone in particular. I have only stressed the importance of retaining the three-party format."

Mr. Murayama ruled out early general elections, which are not due until mid-1997. "This is no time for general elections. We must keep up measures to lift the economy from recession."

Coalition officials said the LDP, Mr. Murayama's socialists, and Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura's Sakigake Party,



Tomiichi Murayama

would convene a special session of parliament on Jan. 11 to name the new prime minister.

As long as the coalition stays intact, it will be able to choose a new prime minister because the group as a whole commands solid majorities in both houses of parliament.

The coalition holds 294 seats in the 511-member lower house, the decisive chamber in naming the prime minister.

Ichiro Ozawa, leader of the main opposition Shinshinto (New Frontier Party), criticised reported moves to name Mr. Hashimoto the next prime minister.

"This simple change of premiers within the three parties is not good at all," Mr. Ozawa said. "The government should ask the people to judge (by calling general elections)."

Mr. Murayama's entire cabinet was expected to resign before Jan. 11. A change of premier requires the formal resignation of the cabinet but they would remain as caretakers until the appointment of a new government.

Mr. Murayama's announcement came amid some media reports that he might hand over power to Mr. Hashimoto after the passage through parliament of the state budget for the

next fiscal year.

But it caught almost everyone by surprise, with many officials in the Socialist Party, the LDP and the prime minister's office still on New Year holidays.

Only Thursday, Mr. Murayama held a news conference and defended key points of the budget bill, to be submitted to parliament later in January.

Friday, soon after he said he had decided to quit the premiership, Mr. Murayama also said he would seek reelection as chairman of his troubled Socialist Party.

He said that decision was not related to his resignation from the premiership.

"The two jobs are distinctively separate, and I intend to fulfil my responsibility of forming a new party at the convention on Jan. 19," Mr. Murayama said.

His supporters failed to persuade a leftist hardliner, Tadatoshi Akiha, to drop plans to run against Mr. Murayama. Intra-party voting takes place from Jan. 14-15.

Mr. Murayama's supporters had wanted him to be reelected without a vote because they feared a vote would split the party. For more than a year the Socialists have been divided into various camps over how and when to transform themselves into a new, liberal party.

Mr. Murayama can be forgiven for feeling weary after a tumultuous 555 days in office, which has seen a killer earthquake, an urban terrorist attack on Tokyo's subway, bank failures and a lingering recession.

He became prime minister in June 1994 after the formation of the current left-right coalition.

Women dominate Grammy music award nominations

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif (R)

— Women performers dominated the Grammy music award nominations Thursday, led by Mariah Carey and two singer-songwriters who burst on the scene last year — Alanis Morissette and Joan Osborne.

Ms. Carey and Ms. Morissette each grabbed six Grammy nominations, while Ms. Osborne took five, with country singer Shania Twain and Rhinoceros getting four each, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences announced at a news conference.

The top male performers, each with five nominations, were Rb producer-songwriter Babyface and Glen Ballard, who produced and co-wrote Ms. Morissette's debut U.S. Album "Jagged Little Pill".

Mr. Hillman said he refused bail for the two men who live and work in the Los Angeles area because he saw "no evidence they renounced the idea of achieving political goals by violent means."

Before the judge handed down his decision, more than 100 friends and family members of the men accused of conspiracy and violating the neutrality act waited outside of the packed courtroom for his ruling.

Inside, Mr. Garcia's Attorney Barry Hammond argued that the men never had an elaborate plan to overthrow the communist Castro government and were guilty only of harbouring the same dreams as many in the Cuban-American community.

"Maybe they had a dream," Mr. Hammond said. "Maybe they overreacted in their own individual bobbies ... but it was more of a fantasy than a reality."

On Dec. 18, 1995, the Federal Bureau of Investigation staged a raid on a warehouse belonging to the senior Cruz and seized truckloads of ammunition and weapons allegedly linked to the three men.

If convicted, they could face prison sentences of three to five years. Among those who turned out in support of the three men were members of the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association, a group mostly of Cubans who participated in a 1961 bungled attempt, known by the same name, to overthrow Mr. Castro.

That group, which

Judge denies bail in alleged plot to overthrow Castro

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Two men accused of stockpiling weapons and plotting to overthrow Cuban President Fidel Castro were denied bail Thursday, though a third man was allowed to post bond.

U.S. Magistrate Stephan Hillman granted \$100,000 bond for Rene Cruz Sr., 68, but denied bail to his 47-year-old son Rene Cruz and alleged co-conspirator Rafael Garcia, 45.

Mr. Hillman said he refused bail for the two men who live and work in the Los Angeles area because he saw "no evidence they renounced the idea of achieving political goals by violent means."

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That group, which

launched its plot from U.S. soil, had planned to invade Cuba after the communist revolution with the expectation that the invasion would spark a chain-reaction spontaneous uprising against Mr. Castro.

But its members never even so much as established a beachhead on Cuban shores before they were pummeled by pro-Castro forces and did not receive hoped-for U.S. military support.

It was one of the most embarrassing chapters in U.S.-Cuban history and has made both governments wary of Cuban paramilitary groups which have sprung up in the United States ever since.

Rene Cruz was a major in Mr. Castro's army in the early stages of the Cuban revolution but was eventually jailed as a political prisoner, according to the association. He was released in 1979 and went to the United States.

Indian opposition wants communist as premier

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's secular opposition is pushing a veteran communist as a possible premier in the event of a victory in upcoming general elections, but the political stalwart is cool to the idea.

Leaders of the country's main centrist party, the Janata Dal (People's Party), say Marxist Jyoti Basu should be the choice to head a government in case the centre-left coalition wins the hustings only months away.

Even the business community is not averse to the proposal since Mr. Basu, 81, who has been chief minister of the eastern state of

West Bengal since 1977, is considered a pragmatist who regularly wooes Indian and foreign capital.

The Suave Basu, who embraced Marxism while studying law in London during the British Raj and whose only son is a successful businessman, has remained silent to the appeals to play a more active role in national politics.

His headline Communist Party of India (Marxist), the country's dominant leftist group and die-hard admirers of Stalin, refuses however to permit Mr. Basu to head a "bourgeois" government.

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Time for change

WHEN SHARIF Zeid Ben Shaker formed his government in early 1995, he chose to include in it 17 deputies representing most of the major blocs, save for the Islamists, in Parliament. The prime minister opted for this sort of parliamentary coalition apparently to ensure a more cooperative House in a year that had to see the passage of laws related to the peace treaty with Israel. Now that the last order of 1995, the 1996 budget, has cleared the House, the country might see either a change of government or a Cabinet reshuffle as His Majesty King Hussein indicated in a recent interview.

So what kind of government should we hope for in the new era of peace and amid the challenges of mounting poverty, unemployment and other economic and political problems?

First of all Jordanians want to see a Cabinet that is not overburdened by the presence of a high number of deputies and ministers without portfolios. Not only are these deputies inclined to serve the narrow interests of their own constituents at the expense of the national interest but they also hamper the work of technocrats who are expected to introduce reforms to the different sectors of the bureaucracy.

Second, Jordanians want to see persons with vision and proven managerial abilities enter the Cabinet. Such type of ministers, who have defined policies and who can pursue their agenda with vigour and clarity, can relieve the leadership from constantly intervening in government business or from seeking to repeatedly assure people and allay their fears and concerns. Members of the present government have on many occasions been criticised by the leadership, without being named, for failing to carry out the policies of the regime or for not being able or willing to address and correct certain internal questions.

Jordan enters 1996 and heads rapidly towards the 21st century burdened with a range of unresolved problems. These are present in all aspects of the economy, the civil service, the education sector, health and also in precarious relations with Arab neighbours.

What is urgently needed is not a government that has so much to appease the Parliament — even though the two should always have good working relations — but one that can convince the legislators of its programme. A successful government is one that has such a programme and a clear purpose. It is never one that seeks to represent people without being able to carry out its promises to the people and pave the way for a brighter future. The time is ripe to come up with a more homogeneous Cabinet that can learn from the experiences and mistakes of the past year.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Al Ra'i said that Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinians should not negotiate with Israel over defining who is a displaced person from Palestine or who can return. "We have already ceded the largest part of Palestine to Israel because it is far stronger than us militarily and because the United States continues to back the Jewish state, but we have the smaller part for ourselves and for the Palestinians who should be able to decide their own future by themselves and decide who is displaced, and who has the right to return," said Tareq Masarweh. "Israel has already admitted that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were occupied territories by agreeing to the redeploy its troops from Palestine's towns and villages and by giving the Palestinians the right to hold parliamentary elections and to negotiate with Israel over the final status of the Palestinian land," said the writer. He said that the Arab countries and the Palestinians should not give the Israelis the right to decide who can or who cannot be repatriated and should not allow the Israelis to control the crossing points on the River Jordan allowing some and preventing others from entering the self-rule areas, demanded the writer. He said that the Israelis who are pulling out in stages from the Arab lands and who will soon be negotiating with the Palestinians over the fate of the settlements and Jerusalem have no right to be in control of the Palestinians in the liberated lands.

A WRITER in Al Dustour backed a call by a number of Parliament members that the government declare Dec. 25, which is Christmas day, an official public holiday. Bassam Haddadin, a deputy said that by demanding that Christmas day be a public holiday the deputies wanted to prove to the world that Jordan is a country where religious tolerance and co-existence among the Christians and Muslims is a fact and that sectarian bigotry and fanaticism of any kind do not exist among the Jordanian society.

Jordanian Perspective

PNA is victor in talks with Hamas

By Dr. Musa Keilani

THE FINAL communiqué which was issued in Cairo by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Hamas after the talks they held there reveals a lot more than the phraseology indicates. It shows that PNA Chairman Yasser Arafat successfully managed to contain Hamas using his well-known taming tactics of carrot and stick policy.

One of Hamas negotiating leaders was frank enough with me when he said upon his return from Cairo two days ago: "We had four days of real hard negotiations with Abu Al Adeeb (Salim Al Za'atoun) but we could not change (the PNA's) positions regarding the elections or possible future military operations inside the green line."

The golden formula reached was an agreement to refrain publicly embarrassing each other.

Mr. Za'atoun, a former Muslim Brotherhood member, relied on Islamic jargon to convince Hamas not to launch suicide missions against Israel. He rebuffed Osama Abu Hamdan, the Hamas representative in Tehran, who tried to defend the Iranian support for Palestinians since 1979.

It was clear from the beginning that Hamas could not publicly endorse what the Palestine National Authority has always demanded regarding the peace process and the Oslo accords. Had it done so, it would have lost the support of its two main patrons: Sudan and Iran. Hamas' strategic relationship with those two rejectionist states signifies its physical survival at political, financial and logistic levels. In the case of the Iranian benefactor, Hamas had a chance to train its cadres in Hizbollah camps in Lebanon and Iran; such a friend cannot be alienated.

Moreover, it was doubtful whether Mr. Arafat wanted Hamas to come out publicly toeing his line.

Mr. Arafat needs this "Islamic boogey man" to be a card in his hands whenever he wants to scare his Israeli counterparts. Such a card will be very valuable in months ahead, when the final status negotiations start. By then different faces might be sitting at the other side of the table either in Tel Aviv or in Washington. At such a time ideological fanatics of self-sacrificing hero-martyrs are a big asset to recreate a favourable bargaining position.

Moreover, the PNA negotiating team managed to drive a wedge between one group of Hamas hard-liners in Arab capitals like Abu Hamdan (Iran) Mohammad Nazzal (Jordan) and the second group of Hamas pragmatists who live under occupation like Jamil Hamami (Jerusalem), Hassan Yousef (Ramallah), Abdul Khaliq Al Natashbeh (Hebron).

Hamas boycott of the elections on Jan. 20 was one of the seven items on the PNA-Hamas agenda in Cairo. Though Hamas presented as victory its refusal to budge from its

position to boycott the elections, such decision was a God-sent gift to Mr. Arafat to have no real competition for his Fateh candidates. When the Palestinian National Assembly convenes, it will be staffed by Fateh members with a tiny minority independents, some of whom could form a thin "visage" of opposition.

Mohammad Nazzal's statement regarding Hamas' not taking part in the elections is what Nabil Amr of Fateh has been praying for recently.

So, the PNA-Hamas conflict has been put on the back-burner. Within few months Mr. Arafat's authority will quadruple when more Palestinian cities are evacuated, more prominent personalities are appointed in key posts, more international support is announced and more millions of dollars in subsidies and donations are received. By then, the de-facto influence of Mr. Arafat will be too strong for Hamas to contest or confront. The only option then will be for Hamas to accept to be part of the system. Abdul Fattah Dukhan of Hamas might have been prophetic when he said, "Arafat is containing our organisation gradually, eating us one morsel by morsel, digesting us one part by one part."

Since Hamas cannot stand up to him now, how can we do it when his political influence spreads all over new Palestinian territories and his largesses reaches to all mukhtars and families, he said.

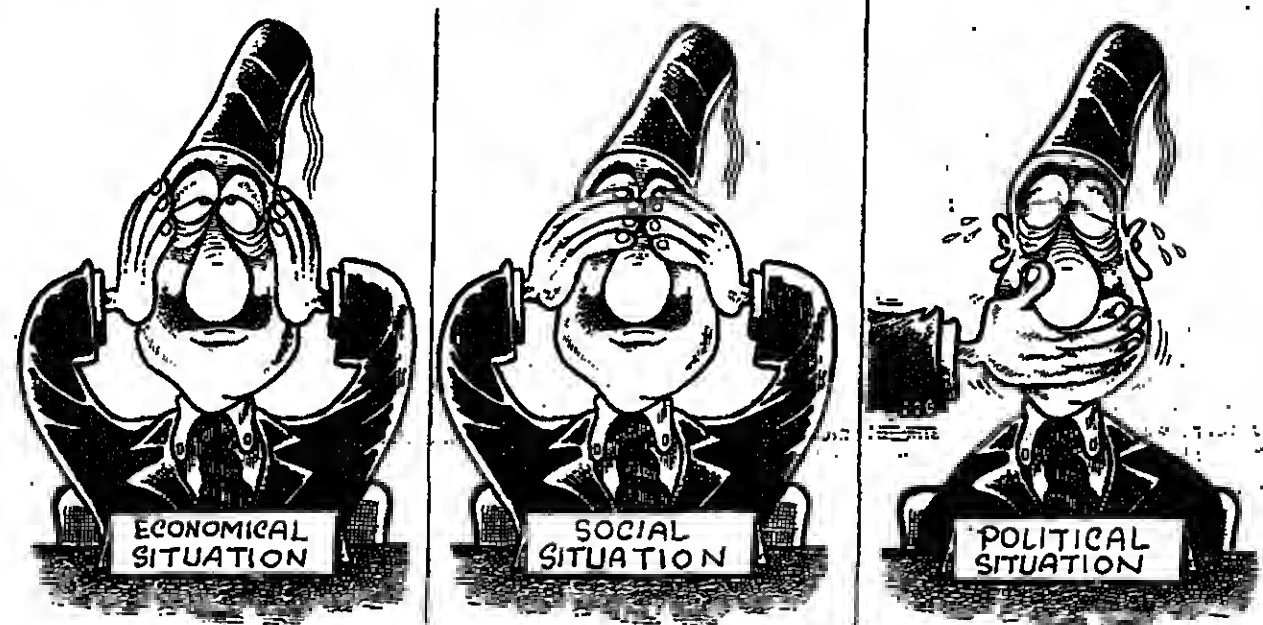
In conclusion it can be said the PNA scored a great point by enticing Hamas into a dialogue. Many leaders of Hamas made it clear they kept a very low profile immediately after the announcement of the Declaration of Principles few years ago, so that they would allow the peace process to unfold without obstruction. Such a stand was the result of the position many analysts adopted in terms of waiting to see if the peace talks would succeed and bring an end to the occupation and to economic miseries.

The situation now is very much similar. There has been an evacuation of troops from six Palestinian cities.

More evacuation will take place soon. Israeli Premier Yitzhak Rabin's assassination was an eye-opener for Hamas, since it exposed the ugly face of Israeli extremist forces working against peace. It was only then that they realised how genuine Mr. Rabin was in his search for peace in spite of the restraining forces of the Temple Mount Faithful, the settlers Council Movement and the ultra-orthodox political right.

It was then that they felt a need to give Mr. Arafat a chance. That chance, it is hoped, will save a great deal of bloodshed and terror.

LEBANON



M. KAHIL

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Writers support Syria's bid for peace

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah

THE ONGOING Syrian-Israeli negotiations and their repercussions on the region, the Palestinian elections and Israeli policies were among the main issues discussed by writers in the local Arabic daily press in the past week.

Al Dustour daily noted in an editorial that the Israeli-Syrian negotiations in the second week were not as smooth as those of the first week. The talks were shrouded with a great deal of optimism in the first week in Washington and it was the Israelis who showed the greatest degree of optimism, and it is they who are now retreating in the second week, said the paper. Perhaps Israeli internal policies and the fear of the results of the coming elections are now influencing the Israeli government's attitude and causing a change in position, said the paper. "Let us hope that the obstacles that surfaced in the second week would not cause the Israelis to retreat further and that Tel Aviv would respond favourably to Syria's demands for a full withdrawal for a complete peace," said the paper.

As Syria goes ahead with the negotiations with Israel over a peace treaty, Damascus has come under severe criticism from Iran, which has been launching a hostile campaign against Damascus for holding talks with Israel, said Ahmad Al Mislleh, a writer in Al Ra'i daily. Iran has no right to criticise Damascus for trying to regain the Golan Heights from Israel through negotiations. Tehran should halt its unjustified campaign," said the writer. He charged that in the absence of Iraq as a regional power, Iran has been im-

ing to play the role of a regional superpower influencing the policies of its neighbours and imposing its will on Syria as well as the Arab Gulf states.

Salah Al Qallab, writing in Al Dustour, also criticised Iran for its present position and said sooner or later relations between Damascus and Tehran are bound to deteriorate. The writer said that by making peace with Israel, Damascus would find itself forced to bridge the resistance activities carried out in southern Lebanon by the Iranian-backed Hizbollah militia, something which will in turn adversely affect Syrian-Iranian ties. Israel and the United States seem to be agreed on recognising Syria's influence on Lebanon and they of course would expect from Damascus to stem Hizbollah's activities against the Jewish state, added the writer.

Mahmoud Rimawi, a writer for Al Ra'i, dwelt on the same topic urging Iran to mend relations with Syria and stop criticising Syria for negotiating peace with Israel. The writer said that the Iranian foreign minister had cancelled a visit to Damascus after Syria along with the Gulf states and Egypt declared their support for the United Arab Emirates in its dispute with Iran over Gulf islands. He said that Syria's position regarding the islands was not a novelty and could not have prompted the Iranian minister to cancel the visit. But he said the cancellation was clearly meant as an Iranian protest against Damascus's negotiations with Israel.

Mohammad Kharroub, also writing in Al Ra'i, referred to Iran's current

campaign against Syria and said that the campaign could by no means dissuade Damascus from the talks over the fate of the Golan Heights. The writer said that Iran had its influence in Lebanon and could try to escalate Hizbollah's resistance activities against Israel in order to disrupt the Israeli-Syrian negotiations. But he noted that Syria had a strategic interest in regaining its lost territory and in maintaining its influence in Lebanon with the approval of the United States and Israel. If Tehran persisted in antagonising Damascus, it would be further straining its relations with the whole Arab World, especially with Syria's allies in the Gulf, said the writer.

Taher Adwan, a writer for Al Dustour daily, said it was regrettable to see only a few Arab capitals rejoicing over the return of the Palestinian towns to Palestinian sovereignty despite the fact that the liberation marked a major historical event. The writer said that without a peace treaty and through negotiations, the Palestinians would not have been able to regain their rights. With the negotiations starting in May over the final settlement and the final status of Jerusalem, the Palestinians would be paving the ground for a final solution to their problem before signing a treaty with the Jewish state, said the writer. In the meantime, he said the Palestinians were in need of full Arab economic as well as moral support for their heroic endeavours.

A writer in Al Ra'i said that Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres had just declared that his country would not pay any compensation to Palestinian victims of the uprising claim-

ing that the intifada was in effect a state of war between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Mahmoud Rimawi said that Mr. Peres had tried to overlook the loss of the Arab lands and waters, which Israel had been stealing since 1948, way before the intifada started. The Israelis should understand that the Palestinians have suffered a great deal not only when the Jewish state came into being at the expense of the Palestinian lands and rights in 1948 but also because of the 1967 war which completed Israel's control of the whole of Palestine and caused the displacement of the Palestinian people.

Mohammad Kawash, a writer in Al Dustour, said that the Palestinian elections would be in the spotlight until they were held later this month and the Arab and world nations would be fixing their eyes on the results which could shape the future of the Palestinian people. The writer said to ensure the success of fair and free elections the Palestine National Authority ought to prove to the whole world its abidance by the rules of democracy and should avoid detaining journalists, and imposing martial rule on the people.

Men should refrain from habit of kissing one another

By Dr. Ahmad Al Tell

ON FRIDAY Dec. 29, 1995 I attended the funeral of the late Hanna Abu Jaber at the Christian cemetery in Um Al Hiran. Once the funeral ceremony and the burial ended the immediate relatives of the late Mr. Abu Jaber stood in line on a specially assigned platform to receive condolences from those who attended the funeral according to Jordanian tradition.

Surprisingly I noticed that the mourners were shaking the hands of the members of the bereaved family without going through the ritual of kissing, hugging and embracing. It was only when my turn came to offer the condolences that I saw a large poster hung on the awning with the following words: "Thank you for attending the funeral, please refrain from kissing. Shaking hands is enough."

I noticed also that all the mourners except for a handful of men, who most probably did notice the poster, abided by the request and refrained from kissing the Abu Jaber men.

This scene reminded me of a report in Al Ra'i daily two years ago about the mayor of the Turkish town of Adana who had issued an order prohibiting men in his town from kissing one another in public for health and religious reasons. Having read that report, I sought the views of a Muslim scholar in Jordan asking him about the habit of men kissing one another and the ruling of Islam in this case.

The scholar said that the habit of men kissing one another was detestable and distasteful in Islam and was a habit that had been prohibited by the Prophet Mohammad.

I recall a document issued several years ago by the inhabitants of Salt which called on men to refrain from kissing one another in public or private. I wonder though how many Salts had responded to that call.

Men kissing one another is one of the common habits and familiar scenes in Jordan and other Arab societies. A man meeting his friend, his colleague or his brother following long absence is often seen kissing him on the cheek several times. This kind of kissing among men is meant to show that they were longing to see each other. Following the kissing by two they normally indulge in a friendly exchange, with each asking the other about the reason for his absence, about his job, his health, his family etc.

Kissing among men is also practiced when students pass examinations, or graduate from college, and when people celebrate a wedding, are discharged from hospital, escape from a road accident or a fight, or are saved from a financial crisis and also in expressing condolences over death.

Kissing among men is not confined to close circuit of family of friends extends to unreasonable boundaries, and is being practiced on a large scale, on various occasions. Indeed, it has become a "duty" of men friends to kiss one another even if they had only not seen one another for 24 hours. Kissing sometimes takes place between two men who meet for the first time.

I appeal to all those who agree with my views to fight off this bad habit of men kissing one another and to start by applying the rule to themselves and gradually spreading the good habit through their own clans because this habit contravenes with all health, religious and social principles.

I salute the mayor of Adana and writers of the Salt document as well as those in charge of the Um Al Hiran Christian cemetery who had set a good example by ruling against men kissing one another and calling only for hand shake in public and private.

Dr. Ahmad Tell is a retired educationist who served as secretary general of the Ministry of Higher Education, and dean of the Zarga private community college. The article is translated from Al Ra'i Arabic daily.

Japan premier's resignation leaves policy unclear

By Linda Sieg
 Reuter

TOKYO — Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama's decision to step down, most likely in favour of outspoken Trade Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, spells few sudden economic policy shifts, but leaves many questions unanswered.

Among them, analysts said, was the key issue of just how long many administration could survive before being forced to call snap general elections.

"Share prices rose and the dollar slid on the news, but we really don't know what the logic is and conversely, we don't know what (the new administration) will do," said Takashi Kiuchi, chief economist at the long-term Credit Bank of Japan.

Mr. Murayama, Japan's first socialist premier in four decades, said on Friday he would step down to let the ruling coalition's biggest party — the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) — take over.

He told a news conference that no decision had been made on his successor, but political pundits tipped Mr. Hashimoto as the obvious choice.

Mr. Hashimoto, the LDP's aggressive leader who grabbed headlines last year with his tough stance in bitter car trade talks with the United States, would have to be elected by a special session of parliament, most likely this week.

Some analysts said his confirmation as leader was not a foregone conclusion, given that some socialists might balk at the prospect.

Economists said if Mr. Hashimoto was elected and the three-way coalition, which also includes the small reformist new party Sakigake, held firm, there would probably be little immediate impact on the eco-

nomy or financial markets. "At the moment it's just a mild type of surprise, not really a shocking type of thing that would change the overall direction of the economy," said Masanobu Takahashi, chief economist at Sanyo Investment Research.

The dollar, whose recent rally was dented by profit-taking in Tokyo on Friday morning, slipped further on news that Mr. Murayama would step down.

In late Tokyo trade the dollar was off its lows but still shaky at about 104.70 yen against a peak of 106.55 yen on Thursday in New York.

Mr. Hashimoto was elected as LDP leader last September on a platform calling for traditional economic stimulus to boost the nation's long-stalled economy. That stance made him the darling of stock market punters and indeed, share prices rebounded on Friday on news he was likely to succeed Mr. Murayama.

But Mr. Hashimoto has found less favour with critics who say that Japan needs bold deregulation to ensure future growth.

That stance would not endear him to the United States but analysts said his past performance on trade issues would be unlikely to sour a planned summit visit by U.S. President Bill Clinton in April.

Japan's next leader at any rate faces numerous challenges — not least how to win parliament's approval for a highly unpopular plan to spend a big chunk of taxpayers' money to help wind up the nation's mortgage firms.

The plan came under heavy fire when it was unveiled by the Finance Ministry last month, and the opposition promises to make it a key focus of attack when parliament opens its regular session later this month.

Journey of the modern magi

Paul Vallely retraces the steps of the Three Wise Men through Syria, Jordan and finally to Bethlehem — through a world in which many things have remained unchanged despite centuries of political turmoil

THE DARKNESS crept swiftly down upon the wreckage of the castle Saladin, built in the 12th century to protect the ancient oasis of Palmyra from the predations of the infidel Crusaders. It was a storybook castle of towers and turrets on top of a jagged hill overlooking the extensive ruins of the first-century city whose ruined colonnades were laid out in clear lines below.

The waters have flowed there, the only water source for hundreds of miles in the heart of the Syrian desert, for at least 4,000 years, keeping Palmyra for millennia at the crossroads of the caravan trade. No one knows whether the Three Wise Men of Christian legend existed. No one can be sure where they began their search for the child whose birth was to usher in a new era. But one thing is certain, whatever their starting point, they would have passed through Palmyra. A journey to retrace their steps — on which I was accompanied by two other modern magi, Bishop Rowan Williams, the former Professor of Divinity at Oxford, and Professor Heather Cooper, an astronomer — passed through a land to which many things remain unchangingly the same.

It is still a region of turmoil and political tensions; it is still dominated by imperial powers of one kind or another. In those days control had recently passed from Alexander the Great in the east to the west of Imperial Rome. It is a polarity that remains today, with an Israel which looks to the west and a Palestine which looks east to Mecca. Outside the Saracen castle, even before the sky was completely dark, a single star appeared. There are dozens of theories about the Star of Bethlehem; it may have been a supernova or a comet. But it is most likely to

have been created by a conjunction of Jupiter with another planet, Saturn.

A triple conjunction took place in the zodiacal constellation of Pisces in the year 6BC (the year in which historians now think Christ was born). The Magi had the planet that represented the ruler of the world (Jupiter) conjoined with was also the star of Palestine (Saturn, which was also the star of justice) in the constellation of the Jews (Pisces). To a Parthian magus it would have signalled that a ruler of the world's last days was about to be born among the Hebrews in Palestine.

The Magi brought gifts suitable for a temporal monarch — gold, a symbol of wealth; frankincense, a sign of authority; and myrrh, an embalming spice, which spoke of sorrow. They are symbols which still speak of life in the Middle East today.

A week's camel ride from Palmyra lies Damascus, the oldest continuously occupied city in the world. Its ancient spice market, a blur of bright colours, exotic smells and bawling, had frankincense in plenty. It was appropriate, for the capital is one of the region's centres of power. In the days of the Magi it was an important province of the Roman Empire. Today is the most formidable of Israel's neighbours.

In the coffee houses and fountained courtyards of Damascus, the talk was of Israel. For public consumption the rhetoric was uncompromising: "The Golan Heights are ours. There can be no compromise. The Israelis must withdraw."

In private, however, it was all more nuanced. The Foreign Minister, I was told, had recently briefed army officers and Ba'ath party officials about the potential benefits of peace. The Quote for the

Day carried by the state-controlled newspaper frequently now constitutes a message for peace. Only days after we left the city it was announced that negotiations between Syria and Israel are to recommence.

In Amman, one of Jordan's Christian leaders, Fr. Moussa Adeli, an Arab by birth and a Melchite priest of the Latin rite, issued an invitation to dine. He was preoccupied with a journey of a different kind — that of the unending stream to his door of Iraqis who have crossed the border in search of help. Christian and Muslim alike, they are not just poor but malnourished and made desperate by the economic collapse of their country under United Nations sanctions following the Gulf war.

"Huge numbers of ordinary people are going hungry, many are starving, many are ill — deprived of medicine as well as food," he said. He gives them food, where he can, and organises relief operations into parts of the country that can easily be reached from Amman.

Fr. Moussa is a Christian and no friend of Saddam Hussein, but he was vehement in his advocacy of the need for a change in policy by the UN, to lift the sanctions.

"In Iraq, people are losing part of their humanity," he said. The picture he painted was one that, in other circumstances, would be the subject of dramatic coverage by the world's television companies. "If you want to know what hell is like," concluded Fr. Moussa with devastating simplicity, "go to Iraq."

In Jordan, we had found myrrh, real sorrow. The source of that sorrow, Iraq, was of the Wise Man trail. We were in search of the third gift, gold. So we headed for Jerusalem, the centre in

which all the important political and religious influences of the region meet.

Israel is a modern, resource-hungry state. Everywhere new buildings were being thrown up as if they had descended overnight upon the land. The desert bloomed.

But at what cost? The water for irrigation, claim the Palestinians, is stolen from them: the Israelis take 80 per cent of the underground water. On the West Bank, 120,000 Jewish settlers take some 60 million cubic metres of water a year, leaving only 137 million cubic metres between the 1.5 million Palestinians; 60 per cent of Israeli land is irrigated, compared with only 6 per cent of Palestinian land. And Palestinians have been prohibited since 1967 from digging new wells.

The Western Wall of the Temple in Jerusalem (is believed by Israelis to be) a site of great holiness to Jews; historically, it is one of the few parts of Christ's birth. This was Herod's temple. The Magi must have stood at the place at some time. They were, after all, "invited" by the tyrant to visit him there. It is only a few hundred yards from the great Islamic and Christian shrine, the Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

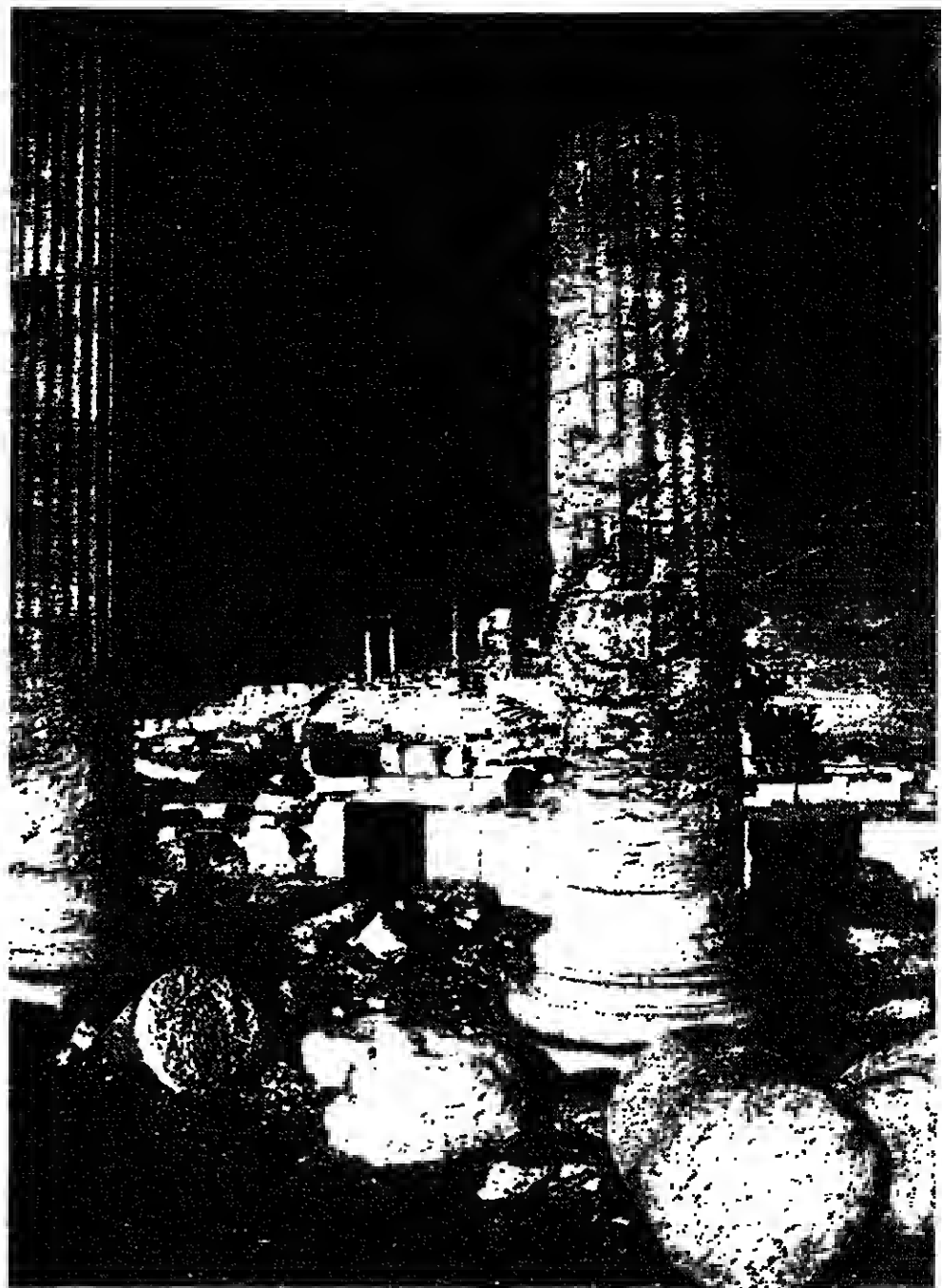
It was almost dusk; the Sabbath had begun. Our guide, an Arab Christian, was brusquely refused entrance even through below brash tourists wandered the vast courtyard before the huge stones of all the remains of Herodian glory. Then from the distance the sound of singing could be heard. A phalanx of men appeared, their arms round each other's shoulders, all wearing skull-caps and some with fringed prayer shawls. They danced in shuffling little steps across the yard like a rippling cen-

tipede. Their singing was stentorian and aggressive.

It was as if, here, religion was some kind of competition, a contest in excess rather than a call to inner development. In places like this there is something about the collective religious experience that seems trivialising, superstitious and oppressive. Indeed, Jerusalem has not changed since Christ's day: here religion is power, the subjugator of individuality, an oppressor. To Jerusalem, religion seems a rock not to be built upon but to be stumbled over, broken upon. But it has always drawn people as well. Fr. Jerome Murphy O'Connor, one of the leading authorities in biblical archaeology at the Ecole Biblique in the city had great doubts about the veracity of the Magi's story. "You're talking about a metaphor but a very powerful metaphor," he said, looking over Jerusalem from the roof of the college. "You might find the modern equivalents of the story in the experiences of refugees in so many different countries — people guided by circumstances over which they have no control."

That is an experience which is more common in our time than ever before — in the past 10 years the number of refugees and displaced people in the world has doubled — there are today some 20 million people without a home. "The Holy Family were forced out of Bethlehem; they first went to Egypt, but even later they couldn't come back to Judea because the next regime was just as bad," said Fr. Jerome. "That's why they eventually ended up in Nazareth, where a new city was being built. That sort of 'guidance' resonates in our experience much more than the story of a star."

Not far from Bethlehem is Deisha, a refugee camp for



Palmyra: for thousands of years an oasis in the Syrian desert and still a region of political tension

about 2,000 Palestinians. Perhaps that is the place where modern magi should seek a child to be born; not in wealth or power but on the margins of what the world holds to be important.

And so, the next day, we covered the final dozen or so miles of the journey, to Bethlehem. After all the grand history of Palmyra, Damascus and Jerusalem this final destination was a run-down, seemingly seedy little town where life looked very ordinary with shopkeepers setting out their stalls in its narrow streets in front of graffiti painted walls.

Entering Manger Square, the eye was drawn not to the basilica or even the new tourist shopping centre but to the police station with its lookout

tower. Soldiers, casually swinging their arms, wandered around the square, much as members of the occupying Roman army must have done 2,000 years before. Bethlehem was in Arab hands until it was occupied by Israel during the Six Day War in 1967. But things were changing. The Israeli troops withdrew a week before Christmas as part of the peace plan to hand over West Bank towns to new Palestinian authorities.

Behind it all stood the basilica, a big building with a tiny door, only 4ft high. We stooped and entered. It was not yet 8am, but inside they were singing already. The Church of the Nativity stands over the cave identified by the second-century Christian

apologist, Justin Martyr; it was built by Helena, the mother of the first Christian Roman Emperor, Constantine. In the grotto beneath the altar we crawled on all fours to the spot where the birth is said to have taken place. How could anyone know this, part of me rumbled sceptically. But another part wondered in a different way about the grey slate floor that lies beneath the marble and silver.

But in the end there was nothing there, apart from the residue of the veneration of millions of believers across the ages. Christ was born in a manger place. He is not here, I thought, and wondered how far it was to the refugee camp at Deisha.

The Independent

Jordan hosts UNCTAD

(Continued from page 1) in helping developing countries overcome their problems.

The second document, Dr. Smadi said, will address cooperation among the Asian countries in fields of development and trade.

"It is expected that long discussions on those issues will take place in order to prepare a working agenda for the mother conference in South Africa this April," he said.

"We hope to reach a common vision to carry out cooperation strategies among the Asian group for the next UN-

CTAD meeting," he added. Dr. Smadi told reporters recent developments in the Middle East have to be accompanied with economic changes in order to bolster the peace process.

He said he believed that in order to achieve comprehensive development in all the countries of the Asian group, some problems have to be overcome such as indebtedness and investment which will be given significant attention during the conference.

Dr. Smadi also stressed the importance of investment in all countries and sectors of

the Asian group.

Without saying that he meant Asia's southeast region, which has witnessed a surge in investment in the past decade, Dr. Smadi said that "investment should be directed towards all countries and sectors of the group."

Asked if there was a link between the Middle East and North Africa Economic Summit (MENA) and UNCTAD, Dr. Smadi said there was a significant relation between the two, as MENA Summit focused on development issues in relation with peace. This conference, he added, will expand the scope of economic discussion and focus on the results of investment

and development.

As for the absence of Israel from the meeting, Dr. Smadi said that Israel was never part of the Asian group nor a part of the Group of 77.

Dr. Smadi said that four Asian countries will not attend the meeting. The United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Syria and Bahrain have not responded to the invitation yet, he said.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade is the organiser of this event along with a number of international organisations.

UNCTAD general conferences are held every four years.

Hamas 'engineer' killed

(Continued from page 1)

security services killed Mr. Ayyash and that Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres had been informed of his death.

A leaflet signed by the Islamic militant group Hamas said Mr. Ayyash, known as "the engineer," had been killed. Islamic militants blamed Israel and vowed revenge.

However, some Palestinian officials expressed doubt, and police said they had not found a body despite an intensive search.

Earlier Friday, Palestinian police searched the Jabalya refugee camp and the town of Beit Lahiya for the scene of the killing amid reports that Mr. Ayyash died in an explosion and later that he was shot to death.

A convoy of 15 police cars, ambulances and news vehicles went up and down the streets of the town, followed by crowds of youths and shouted questions such as "is Yehiya Ayyash dead?"

At nightfall, police surrounded a partially finished two-storey building, and the head of the Palestinian secret service in Gaza, Mohammed Dahlan, entered along with a senior official from Hamas' military wing known as Izzeddin Al Qassam.

Afterwards, reporters were given a handwritten leaflet that said, "Hamas announces to its people the death of Yehiya Ayyash."

The leaflet blamed Israeli security agents for the death, and vowed revenge. However, police came up empty handed.

"We didn't find anything in that building, no bodies, no weapons or traces of blood," said Palestinian police Col. Abdullah Hamoudah.

Israeli security forces went on high alert, expecting revenge attacks.

Mr. Ayyash was blamed by Israel for seven suicide bomb attacks that resulted in the deaths of at least 55 victims and about 300 wounded not including the suicide attackers who were killed.

In recent weeks, reports had suggested Mr. Ayyash had met with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to discuss a truce by militants in their attacks against Israel.

He also was rumoured to have visited the Gaza Strip town of Rafah to pay a condolence call on the family of Fathi Shakaki, the leader of the Islamic Jihad militant group who was assassinated Oct. 26 in Malta. Palestinians blamed Israel for the killing, but Israeli officials declined

to confirm or deny the report.

Israeli officials welcomed the news that Yehiya Ayyash had been killed but declined to say if Israel was in any way connected.

In Beit Lahiya, the death of Mr. Ayyash was announced on mosque loudspeakers and at a rally.

"Hamas is saying that our hero, the hero of all the bombings is a martyr," said the mosque announcer.

An official at a Hamas rally that had been scheduled in the town announced over a microphone that "the Islamic movement regrets that our hero, the engineer, has been assassinated by the Mossad."

After the announcement, panic erupted with hundreds of people running in the streets as a convoy of police cars and ambulances rushed to the scene.

First news of Mr. Ayyash's death was reported by Israeli radio and television stations which said he died in an explosion in a house in this town at the northern end of the strip near the major crossing point to Israel. Later, they said he and a woman were shot to death.

Israel's Police Minister Moshe Shahal welcomed the report of Mr. Ayyash's death, refusing to respond to a question about whether the operation was a joint effort between Mr. Arafat's PNA

and Israeli security forces.

"I think he deserves it," he said.

Mr. Shahal said on Israel radio that the steps were being taken to thwart any attempts to avenge Mr. Ayyash's death.

Mr. Ayyash, 30, earned an electrical engineering degree from Bir Zeit university in the West Bank in 1993 and reportedly learned to make bombs in Iran. He was from the West Bank town of Rafat.

Mr. Ayyash became a hero to some Palestinians, especially in the impoverished refugee camps of the Gaza Strip and West Bank. He reportedly escaped death narrowly on many occasions and sometimes travelled disguised as a Jewish settler or a woman.

Britain denies

(Continued from page 1)

Dominica's Prime Minister Edison James said on Thursday he did not expect Mr. Masara to come to the island, almost all of whose 71,000 people are Christians.

"He is very likely to choose to go to another country of his choice, rather than come to Dominica," Mr. James said in a statement.

King Fahd, driving force behind modern Saudi Arabia

By Steven Swindells
Reuters

DUBAI — King Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz, who on Monday handed the running of the government to his younger half-brother, is a former playboy prince who became the driving force behind the modernisation of Saudi Arabia.

King Fahd handed over the reins of government to Crown Prince Abdullah so that he can rest after suffering a stroke in November. Long before King Fahd's accession to one of the world's richest thrones on June 13, 1982, he was a power behind the scenes in the large Saudi royal family.

The Saudi government says he was born in 1922. He took over the throne on the death of his half-brother King Khaled to become the fifth sovereign of the state founded in 1932 by his father Abdul Aziz Bin Saud after years of territorial conquest.

Some critics suggested that King Fahd's playboy image as a young man and advocacy of Western-style reform posed questions about his ability to rule a deeply conservative nation.

But his political skills helped give Saudi Arabia a leading position in the Arab World and an influential international role. He consolidated the status of the royal family, while Saudi society remained largely unchanged.

In August 1990, he allied Saudi Arabia with the United States against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. But deployment of more than half a million Western troops on the kingdom's soil caused a conflict of values among the conservative Saudi population of 12 million nationals and more than five million foreign workers.

Some Western-educated professionals demanded more freedoms while religious leaders sought a clampdown on anything they deemed contrary to the strict



King Fahd Ben Abdul Aziz

rules of the austere Wahabi sect of Islam to which most Saudis belong.

King Fahd showed no inclination for dramatic social change in a society where there are no cinemas, women are veiled in public and forbidden from driving, and alcohol is banned.

But in early 1992, treading a fine line to avoid alienating middle-class professionals and religious fundamentalists alike, he introduced limited political reforms.

The following year, he set up a 60-man appointed shura (consultative) council and decreed the ministerial terms were to be limited to four years.

The moves were denounced by some in the West as too shallow.

But at home they were seen as a step further in King Fahd's moves to modernise Saudi society by allowing some personal freedoms and paving the way for an orderly succession.

As he ascended the throne in 1982, the Middle East and the international situation

posed major problems for the world's biggest oil-exporting nation.

A global glut had started to depress oil export prices, squeezing the desert kingdom's extensive development projects.

In October 1986, a few months after prices plummeted from more than \$30 a barrel to below \$10, King Fahd showed a tough streak when he fired Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani, who had been oil minister for 24 years.

He appointed Planning Minister Hisham Nazer to succeed Yamani and was credited as the driving force behind an agreement of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1986 to cut output in a bid to boost prices to \$18 a barrel.

Meanwhile the Iran-Iraq conflict and the rise of Muslim fundamentalism threatened the security and stability of the conservative Arab states along the Western shore of the Gulf.

King Fahd responded by developing economic and

security ties with the other nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council — Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

He gave massive financial backing to Iraq against non-Arab Iran, while building the Saudi military to a formidable level.

In March 1989 he sealed a non-aggression pact with Baghdad, apparently to calm Gulf Arab concerns that the 1988 ceasefire with Iran might tempt Iraq to revive long-held claims to the western Gulf states.

Riyadh also maintained close relations with the United States, although not uncritical of what it saw as Washington's pro-Israeli bias and lack of direction in Middle East policy.

After the Gulf war the King came out strongly behind Washington's drive to end the Arab-Israeli conflict, playing a key role in bringing reluctant Arab states such as Syria to the Middle East peace conference in Madrid in October 1991.

King Fahd joined the government in 1953 as the country's first education minister. He served as interior minister from 1962 to 1975, and first deputy prime minister from 1975. He was named crown prince when King Khaled succeeded assassinated King Faisal in March 1975.

In October 1986, King Fahd changed his title from majesty to "the custodian of the two holy mosques" — Islam's holiest shrines at the cities of Mecca and Medina.

A devoted family man, he shuns pomp and does not wear the gold "eqal" (head-dress band) favoured by his father and King Faisal.

King Fahd's health has been the cause of concern for several years. In 1994, a U.S. doctor performed gall bladder surgery on him at a Jeddah hospital. Overweight and diabetic, he uses a walking stick to relieve discomfort from a painful knee.

Jordan earns \$322m from exports of phosphate, phosphatic fertilisers

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) Friday announced that its exports of raw phosphate and phosphatic fertilisers in 1995 were worth \$322 million, up from \$277 million in 1994 and \$217 million in 1993.

A company statement said that exports of phosphoric fertilisers, which last year amounted to 690,000 tonnes, were mainly responsible for the increase in revenues.

According to the statement, the company last year exported a total of 3.88 million tonnes of phosphates and sold 1.14 million tonnes to

the industrial fertiliser complex in Aqaba.

In the past year, the company concluded deals for exporting phosphate to Belgium during 1996, said the statement which noted that this year will also witness the completion of the first expansion project at Shidieh mines which will start initial production in the coming months.

The statement said that with this expansion, the Shidieh mines will alone produce three million tonnes of phosphate annually.

According to the statement, the JPMC is currently

implementing a phosphate compound fertiliser plant, in cooperation with a Japanese firm, adding that production will start early in 1997. It said that work on the phosphoric acid project at Shidieh was going ahead and production was expected in early 1997.

The statement said that JPMC is currently conducting studies with a Norwegian firm to boost the production of phosphoric acid while studies continue for the second expansion project at Shidieh to boost its phosphate production to 6.5 million tonnes by the middle of 1999.

Saudi Arabia in drive to expand mining sector

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia is planning to invest billions of dollars in projects to expand its mining industry as part of a drive to diversify its oil-reliant economy and cut metal imports, experts have said.

The kingdom, the world's biggest oil supplier, has already identified several projects that could exploit its massive mineral wealth and turn the non-oil mining sector into a main source of income, they said.

The projects cover development of phosphate reserves in the north close to the border with Iraq and Jordan at a cost of around 6.55 billion Saudi riyals (\$1.74 billion), according to bankers in the kingdom.

Another project involves development of iron ore reserves in the northwest at a cost of around 2.08 billion riyals (\$580 million).

Development also includes copper mines west of Riyadh while a joint venture with the United States has been created. The Arab-American Shield Company for Minerals Development is due to start operation in 1996 to exploit copper, silver, gold and zinc mines in the town of Najran at a cost of more than 300 million riyals (\$80 million).

"There are plans to carry out large projects in the mining sector as part of the government's drive to boost the non-oil sector," Saudi oil ministry undersecretary for mineral wealth, Ibrahim Al Khubairi, said last week.

"This will largely expand that sector and push growth in it to around nine per cent annually during the sixth development plan," he said in comments published by the Gulf press.

The sixth five-year plan, which was approved last year, is the most radical development scheme in Saudi Arabia's history as it forecasts lower spending but large investment and reforms, including privatisations. The plan will focus on boosting non-oil sectors and it targets a 3.8 per cent annual growth rate.

Economists in Saudi Arabia said most of the mining projects would be carried out in partnership with the private sector. This reverses the previous Saudi policy of having a government monopoly on major industrial projects.

Saudi Arabia, which sits atop a quarter of the world's proven oil reserves, began to encourage the private sector after its economy was hit hard by weak crude prices and huge payments for the Gulf war.

Officials hope the exploitation of more than 35 types of minerals in the kingdom will increase non-oil revenue and

expand the industrial sector. "By developing its mining industry, Saudi Arabia is aiming not only to extract ore and sell it to external markets but also to set up national industries that are associated with such minerals," Mr. Khubairi said.

Saudi Arabia possesses the largest mineral wealth in the Gulf, including around 20 million tonnes of gold ore, 60 million tonnes of copper, 10 billion tonnes of phosphates and millions of tonnes of other elements.

In 1994, it produced nearly 28 million tonnes of gold, copper, phosphates, iron, zinc, magnesium, hauxite, gypsum and potassium. Sales of part of the production fetched more than \$333 million, according to officials.

Riyadh has already utilised part of its mines, with the setting up of two large iron plants at a cost of nearly 4.6 billion riyals (\$1.22 billion), employing 2,530 people. It has also pumped around 17 billion riyals (\$4.53 billion) into the cement and gypsum industry, pushing its production to around 18 million tonnes per year.

"By the year 2010, Saudi Arabia is set to become a mining country, given its large mineral wealth and the capabilities to exploit it," Mr. Khubairi said.

Sri Lanka plans better care for migrant workers

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lanka plans to take better care of the half million migrant workers who provide its biggest source of foreign exchange, media minister Dharmasiri Senanayake has said.

Mr. Senanayake told a news conference the migrant workers, 80 per cent of them domestic servants, remitted 35 billion rupees (\$600 million) annually and had overtaken tea and textiles as foreign exchange earners.

"What is required is better welfare facilities for the workers, better terms and conditions of employment and due care for runaway housemaids who seek sanctuary in our embassies abroad," he said.

The labour ministry planned to send representatives to the Middle East, Singapore and South Korea to study the problems of workers, some of whom were in severe difficulties, he added.

The government has appointed an inter-ministerial sub-committee to see how the problems of migrant workers can be alleviated and to find more jobs overseas for Sri Lanka's unemployed, Mr. Senanayake said.

Colombo applies to join APEC

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka has applied to join the 18-nation Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) to gain stronger economic bargaining power within a regional grouping.

"We are the first country in SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) to apply to join APEC," he told a news conference. "APEC is going to be important in the future." India and Pakistan had also expressed a desire to join APEC, he said.

Egyptian ministers promise faster privatisation

CAIRO (R) — Economic ministers in the new Egyptian cabinet have promised to press on with privatisation through new share issues on the stock exchange.

Economy Minister Nawal Al Tawati, in an interview published in the government newspaper Al Ahram Friday, said she expected to work on this with the public sector ministry which has handled the slow-moving privatisation programme.

"This will help in offering more shares in public sector companies on the market, especially as there are a large number of companies which have been evaluated and much experience has been acquired in offering shares," she said.

Public sector banks could sell off parts of their share portfolios "to enrich and activate the market," she added. Public Sector Minister Atef Obeid, who held the same post in the outgoing cabinet, told reporters after taking the oath of office Thursday that

the state would reduce its shareholding in some companies to less than 50 per cent.

In many cases the state has sold only 10 or 20 per cent of the shares in public-sector companies, retaining full control of the management for itself.

"Implementation of privatisation will be accelerated and this means offering more shares in companies which have already been partially privatised and in some new companies which will offer shares for the first time," the government newspaper Al Gomhuria quoted Mr. Obeid as saying.

Neither minister mentioned specific companies and Mr. Obeid said each company would be examined case by case.

Despite repeated promises, the Egyptian state has sold only a block of shares to the public since July last year, when it cancelled the sale of shares in Heliopolis Housing

and Development because of the poor response.

In November it sold 29 per cent of the equity of Helwan Portland Cement for 167 million pounds.

The slow pace of privatisation has been one of the obstacles to an agreement between Egypt and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Serious talks with the fund will resume later this month after a break of more than a year, officials say.

If the IMF approves of the government's economic policies, Egypt's creditors will waive a last tranche of official debt worth about \$4 billion.

Al Ahram quoted Ms. Tawati as saying that a devaluation of the Egyptian pound was out of the question.

"The present stability of the pound is the best proof of that," she added.

The IMF had pressed for a devaluation but late last year it changed tack, saying this was no longer on the agenda,

Share prices end week at 155.28 points

By Khattab Salman
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Share prices declined at the Jordan stock exchange despite a year-end closing high and a decision by the Central Bank of Jordan's (CBJ) to increase the amount of credits banks can lend for financing subscriptions in or purchases of shares, stocks or financial papers.

The price index slipped 3.270 points in the first four days of trading at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) to close at 155.280 points of the index which is based on price shares of 60 major companies listed at AFM.

The weekly report of AFM put the trading volume at JD 6,837,918 (\$9,768,454.3).

Brokers said that it was still early to examine the impact of the CBJ's recent decision on the market, but said it should be effective.

The new CBJ regulation allows banks to lend up to JD 500,000 (\$714,285) to any person or JD 1 million to any company or institution seeking

ing financing to invest in stocks and shares. These limits are subject to the approval of CBJ.

The report said that the shares of 72 companies were traded this week with 34 dropping, 35 gaining and eight unchanged.

Over 2.2 million shares changed hands this week through 1879 contracts.

Sectoral indices showed that the service companies' index was the only one to gain this week, up 0.65 points or 0.5 per cent rise with a turnover of JD 514591 (\$735,130).

Banks and financial institutions' index slipped by 3.14 points or by 1.67 per cent but accounted for the highest volume of trading totalling JD 4,177,484 (\$5,9 million).

The industrial index lost 4.2 points or (3.26 per cent) with a turnover of JD 2,017,498 (\$2.9 million), and the insurance companies index lost 0.94 points or a 0.71 per cent drop with a volume of trading of JD 128345 (\$183,350).

Dubai creates finance body

DUBAI (AFP) — The Gulf emirate of Dubai has created a finance department to prepare its budget and oversee auditing and other activities at local government offices, the official news agency WAM has reported.

The department, which amounts to a finance ministry for the emirate, will supervise the release of the annual budget, manage state funds, and oversee auditing and other financial activities at local departments, it said.

It will also run government investments, propose laws to attract capital, supervise the lending policy and study draft agreements on avoiding double taxation with other countries, the agency said.

It is Dubai's first finance body as the emirate's annual

budget and other financial operations had been undertaken by the economy department.

Dubai, the second highest and wealthiest member of the UAE, does not publish its annual budget but bankers estimated it at more than five billion dirhams (\$1.36 billion) annually over the past five years.

Dubai produces around 300,000 barrels per day of oil fetching it nearly \$2 billion a year. The other sources of income are aluminium exports, the Emirates airlines and revenues from its dry docks, the biggest in the region.

Its gross domestic product was estimated at around 34 billion dirhams (\$9.26 billion) in 1994.

China urges officials to pay attention to people's hardships

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese officials' all-out pursuit of economic growth and neglect of the hardships faced by many citizens are threatening reforms and national stability, the party mouthpiece has said.

The People's Daily, in a front-page commentary on a joint State Council and party central committee circular calling for greater efforts to help poor and disadvantaged individuals, said that "now some leading cadres push economic construction but

pay little attention to people's lives."

"They think that so long as the economy develops, all problems will be settled so they have little concern for people's interests. This is incorrect," the commentary added.

In reality, economic construction itself relies on uniting and nurturing the potential of the whole population, it said, urging cadres at all levels to change their work style and go down to the grassroots to "listen to the

voices" of the people and carry out serious investigations into their problems.

"This is a political task linked with the reform of our country, the development and stability of the whole nation," it said.

The commentary reflected concern in the Chinese leadership over increasing displays of discontent by individuals who have missed out on the benefits of economic reform and instead seen their standard of living fall in the face of rapidly rising prices,

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

REVUC

NALFK

DYBOIL

NABYRD

Print answer here:

Yesterday's Jumbles: METAL MOUTH TIMELY BENIGN
Answer: Where a farmer puts his money — IN THE TILL

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argenton

But these are my favorite words

OFTEN THROWN OUT DURING SPRING CLEANING.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

THE BETTER HALF

By Glasbergen

"We want to go someplace where dull people with no money and no energy can have the time of their lives."

Peanuts

Andy Capp

Mutt'n'Jeff

S. Korea unveils '96 macroeconomic targets, aids small firms

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea Friday unveiled macroeconomic targets designed to help steer its high-growth economy to a soft landing in 1996 and announced the creation of a department to help small businesses.

Economy and Finance Minister Rha Woong-Bae told the cabinet that the government had set the 1996 gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate target at somewhere between 7.5 per cent, down from last year's estimated GDP growth rate of 9.3 per cent, a government spokesman said.

Stock prices fell 3.2 per cent on the Korea Stock Exchange Thursday and slid another 0.6 per cent Friday amid reports that South Korea's economy might be headed for a rough landing because of rising international raw material prices.

Mr. Rha also said at the cabinet meeting presided over by President Kim Young-Sam that any GDP growth rate higher than 7.5 per cent would increase inflationary pressure in view of the limited economic growth potential.

Inflation would be curbed at a lower level than last year's, with the rise in the consumer price index set at 4.5 per cent, down from last year's estimate of 4.7 per cent.

To meet this inflation target, the government would ensure that money supply would be curbed at somewhere between 11.5 per cent this year, down 0.5 percentage points from 1995.

In return for lower economic growth, South Korea would be left with a smaller current account deficit this

year than last year.

Massive imports of capital goods and materials to fuel the explosive growth of the past year were blamed for the dramatic increase in the current account deficit last year.

The 1996 current account deficit would be somewhere between \$5 and \$6 billion, about \$3 billion less than last year's Mr. Rha said.

Kim Young-Sam said at the meeting that while the country's powerful conglomerates turned out to be the main beneficiaries of the economic boom of recent years, the woes of small and mid-sized business firms had only deepened.

The president told the cabinet to establish a special government office to help nurture small business firms. The office will be in place by the end of next month, a government official said.

He also pledged to double low-interest loans of up to \$2.6 billion this year and promised to lower a variety of taxes for small and mid-sized firms.

Hundreds of small and mid-sized firms have been going bankrupt due to a financial pinch and mounting competition from abroad.

They were the hardest hit by the outbreak of slush-money scandals of former president Roh Tae-Who and his predecessor Chun Doo-Hwan, which sent panicked private lenders into curbing loans.

Those firms outside the country's huge conglomerates, most of whom have exhausted their collateral, have been stranded, facing closed doors at banks and finding even high-interest private loans unobtainable.

Crosswords
not received

Business
Trac
but p
DOLLAR
SPECIAL
ACCOUNT
WEEK
CENTER
ACCESSORIES

Trading at AFM declines in 1995 but price index is highest in 5 years

By Khattab Salman
Special to the Jordan Times
AMMAN — The director general of the Amman Financial Market (AFM) announced Thursday that 1995's price closing was the highest in five years.

Dr. Omayyah Touqan said that the AFM index closed at 159.17 points, up 10.84 per cent from 1994. Dr. Touqan indicated at a press conference held at the AFM during which he revealed the year-end report on the performance of the market, that the turnover in 1995

was JD 419 million (\$598.6 million) which was down 15.4 per cent from 1994's volume. The report showed that 175.8 million shares changed hands through 210.8 thousands deal. Yearly-sectorial indices showed that share prices of banks and industries were up 19.31 per cent and 1.42 per cent respectively. The insurance companies share prices last 5.39 per cent and the services 1.13 per cent.

"A joint listing of companies would be carried out between AFM and the proposed Palestinian stock exchange to be established in Nablus, West Bank," Dr. Touqan said. He added that there was a ready-to-sign agreement on joint listing of companies with Bahrain and that a similar agreement would shortly follow with Oman.

Dr. Touqan also pointed out that the government is currently drafting a "financial papers law" which differentiates between the regulating and monitoring bodies at the AFM. He expressed optimism

that this year would be a good one for the AFM but noted that "we still need more flexible laws and by-laws to facilitate easier access into the AFM." Concerning foreign investments, Dr. Touqan said that 36 companies applied for investment permits to the government with a total of JD 145 million, but these companies were not given permits.

"Total foreign investment during 1995 at the AFM reached JD 8 million from permits prior to June 1994. Since that date no foreign company was granted a permit because of the freeze in that process awaiting the recently adopted investment promotion law," he explained.

The government two weeks ago adopted a law which eliminated curbs on foreign investments at the stock exchange. Brokers said that since the adoption of the law, applications totalling JD 500 million are awaiting to enter the market. 31 per cent of the JD 3.5 billion capitalised stock at the AFM is of Arab ownership while foreign non-Arab ownership at the market still stagnates at 1.7 per cent.

Concerning the profitability of companies at the AFM, the annual report showed that net profits before tax in the first half of 1995 were JD 107 million, up JD 11 million for the comparable period in 1994. Banks and financial institutions accounted for JD 78 million, industrial companies JD 16 million, services companies JD 9.4 million and insurance companies JD 3.1 million.

DAILY BUSINESS

A review of news from the Arabic press

Al Amin Investment Company completes registration procedures, starts operations

WITH THE completion of registration procedures, the Al Amin Investment Company has started operations, according to Islamic principles, which ban usury. The company, which has a JD 10 million capital, will diversify its investments in shares, debentures and other financial papers in addition to investing in industrial, commercial, agricultural, real estate and touristic projects. Other activities that the company will be carrying out include subscribing and trading in shares of companies and conducting brokerage services at the stock exchange and underwriting issues of financial papers to be floated for public subscription as well as managing securities portfolios. The company's board of directors comprise Moussa Shehadeh (chairman), the Jordan Islamic Bank (vice-chairman), Al Amin Securities Company, Al Tawfiq for Investment Funds, the Arabian Steel Pipes Manufacturing Company, the Jordan Engineers Association-Retirement Fund, Al Rizq Commercial Company, Mohammad Abdul Razzeq Al Daoud, Othman Mohammad Badair and the Amman Investment and Securities Company as members (Al Ra'i).

ABB, JISD sign joint venture agreement for a service workshop

AN AGREEMENT was signed last week between JISD, Jordan Investment and Southern Development, represented by its General Manager Mazin Al Nasser, and Near East Electrical Industries Ltd., the ABB Area Brown Boveri organisation in Jordan, represented by its Near East Area Manager Gian Francesco Imperiali, for the establishment of a joint venture. The new company will develop a service workshop for the rewinding of high voltage motors and the servicing of electro-mechanical equipment and components. The workshop will be based in Aqaba and will serve the industry in Jordan and the neighbouring countries. The total investment for this project will reach \$1.5 million, with 60 per cent equity held by ABB and 40 per cent by JISD. ABB's commitment to expand its operation in Jordan has become manifest since it decided to establish its headquarters for the Near East in Amman; since then already three ventures have been initiated; two of them being industrial companies. The Amman organisation is responsible for the ABB business in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. ABB is one of the world's largest groups in electrical engineering for the electric power generation, transmission and distribution, industry, transportation and environmental control. ABB comprises more than 1,000 companies operating in more than 140 countries with main manufacturing centre in over 30 countries. ABB employs 208,000 people worldwide and had an order intake of \$32 billion in 1994. ABB spends about \$2.5 billion of its sales on R&D each year, and has some 17,000 scientists and engineers working in research and product development worldwide, with eight research centres in Europe and the U.S. JISD is an investment company established by the three largest industrial companies in Jordan (Arab Potash Co., Jordan Phosphate Mines Co. and Jordan Cement Factories) for the development of the southern region of Jordan through economically feasible small and medium scale projects. JISD has already developed several joint ventures with different technical partners.

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AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
HOUSING BANK CENTER - AMMAN - JORDANIA				
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607173				
ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (30/12/1995 - 03/01/1996)				
WEEKLY REPORT				
COMPANY'S NAME	TRADING VOLUME	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK PLC	802,580	235.000	235.000	231.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	346,787	4.500	4.500	4.500
ARAB BANK FOR INVESTMENT	95,421	3.750	3.750	3.750
JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	10,487	1.240	1.240	1.200
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	117,657	2.530	2.530	2.510
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK/JER	1,206,546	2.330	2.330	2.290
THE HOUSING BANK	952,852	4.900	4.900	4.740
JORDAN TRUST BANK	5,480	3.020	3.020	2.840
JORDAN CREDIT BANK	99,857	1.120	1.120	1.080
ARAB JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	29,580	3.850	3.850	3.900
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	233,328	3.510	3.510	3.580
UNION BANK FOR SAVINGS & INVESTMENT	48,800	3.150	3.150	3.050
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	21,431	3.650	3.650	3.700
WEST BANK SAVINGS/INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	4,798	2.260	2.260	2.210
ARAB BANK FOR INVESTMENT	89,242	0.920	0.920	0.900
ARAB BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	31,490	5.340	5.340	5.850
WELFARE INVESTMENT BANK	95,468	1.540	1.540	1.400
BANKS SECTOR	4177888	INDEX NUMBER: 184.79		
		CHANGE: -1.67%		
MIDDLE EAST INSURANCE	89,000	2.500	0.000	0.000
JORDAN PRIME INSURANCE	32,917	2.800	2.800	2.800
ARAB UNION INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE	1,400	2.400	2.400	2.520
AL-FARABY INSURANCE	5,559	4.450	4.450	4.120
INSURANCE SECTOR	128345	INDEX NUMBER: 120.55		
		CHANGE: -0.72%		
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	152,752	1.750	1.750	1.740
JORDAN HOTEL & TOURISM	12,154	0.750	0.750	0.700
JORDAN DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	509	1.290	1.290	1.270
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	7,770	1.810	1.810	1.770
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	17,925	1.010	1.010	1.000
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	11,895	1.200	1.200	1.140
SHARONIN HOTEL, RESTAURANT & RECREATION	3,570	0.700	0.700	0.700
JORDAN TRAVEL & TOURISM (JAT-TOUR)	3,985	7.600	7.600	7.970
THIRD MIDDLE EAST & COMMERCE HOTELS	17,699	2.250	2.250	2.100
ARAB TRAVEL FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	143,792	3.260	3.260	3.280
JORDANIAN INVESTMENTS DEVELOPMENT HOLDING	1,428	1.150	1.150	1.130
SARFA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	0,131	1.180	1.180	1.200
UNION CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	89,516	2.280	2.280	2.250
WILSON LAND DEVELOPMENT CO.	42,685	1.210	1.210	1.190
SERVICES SECTOR	515382	INDEX NUMBER: 129.44		
		CHANGE: -1.50%		
ATTACHMENT CONST. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	2,700	1.200	1.200	1.200
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	554,593	3.700	3.700	3.430
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	152,800	3.490	3.490	3.230
THE ARAB POTASH	85,240	5.900	5.900	5.650
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	245,460	10.250	10.250	10.200

JORDAN TRADING				
WEEKLY REPORT				
COMPANY'S NAME	TRADING VOLUME	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK PLC	1,727	7.000	7.000	7.000
ARAB BANK FOR INVESTMENT	14,650	1.470	1.470	1.400
THE JORDANIAN COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	14,703	2.380	2.380	2.400
THE JORDAN WOODS MILLS	13,743	7.920	7.920	7.900
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	218,526	6.690	6.690	6.490
JORDAN CEMENT INDUSTRIES	17,529	6.050	6.050	6.200
JORDAN DAILY	5,998	2.550	2.550	2.600
THE JORDAN PAPER MANUFACTURING	480	2.300	2.300	2.400
THE PUBLIC PRINTING	2,273	2.800	2.800	2.910
ARAB CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	29,703	12.080	12.080	12.200
SPINNING & WEAVING	4,923	1.800	1.800	1.800
BAFPA INDUSTRIES	2,735	2.220	2.220	2.180
DAR AL DAMA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	1,246	7.700	7.700	7.800
ARAB ALUMINUM INDUSTRY	0,960	5.350	5.350	5.300
LYNCHBURG & POLYMER	25,695	0.600	0.600	0.600
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	41,187	1.420	1.420	1.430
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRIES	98,455	1.700	1.700	1.450
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	26,330	1.040	1.040	1.020
INTERNATIONAL PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	42,849	1.700	1.700	1.700
JORDAN CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	5,773	4.850	4.850	5.020
JORDAN ROPEWORK INDUSTRIES	11,460	1.080	1.080	1.090
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	2,040	3.550	3.550	5.400
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	45,649	3.850	3.850	3.940
JORDAN SULPHUR-CHEMICALS	2,474	1.340	1.340	1.280
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	5,966	1.850	1.850	1.820
WILSON UNIVERSITY	1,537	1.600	1.600	1.550
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	21,972	3.150	3.150	3.160
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	122,475	2.000	2.000	1.990
EL-SAY READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	70,035	1.480	1.480	1.420
INTERNATIONAL ROPEWORK & CHEMICALS	27,625	2.250	2.250	2.220
UNION CHEMICAL & WEAVER OIL INDUSTRIES	43,059	1.400	1.400	1.390
	6,934	1.620	1.620	1.620
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	2017558	INDEX NUMBER: 124.79		
		CHANGE: -1.24%		
GRAND TOTAL	689174	INDEX NUMBER: 156.28		
		CHANGE: -0.72%		
PARALLEL MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (30/12/1995 - 03/01/1996)				
WEEKLY REPORT				
COMPANY'S NAME	TRADING VOLUME	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
CENTRAL GENERAL TRADING & STORAGE	8,610	0.750	0.750	0.750
JORDAN GRAIN FACILITIES	108,745	0.740	0.740	0.750
ARAB FIE TRADING	115,603	1.000	1.000	1.030
UNION INVESTMENT CO. 501	33,060	0.870	0.870	0.890
ARAB FOOD & MEDICAL APPLIANCES	11,657	0.800	0.800	0.790
ARAB INVESTMENT & TRANSPORTATION TRADE	9,044	0.700	0.700	0.660
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MACHINERY	3,455	0.460	0.460	0.450
JORDANIAN STEEL PIPES MANUFACTURING CO. LTD.	5,375	3.300	3.300	5.250
NATIONAL CALCIUM INDUSTRIES CO. LTD.	118,574	1.450	1.450	1.230
NATIONAL TEXTILE & PLASTICS IND. CO	10,546	0.900	0.900	0.920
KID PHARM	8,080	0.780	0.780	0.780
JORDAN STEEL	25,311	0.980	0.980	0.980
ARAB ELECTRIC INDUSTRIES	216	0.710	0.710	0.710
UNION TOBACCO	26,967	1.240	1.240	1.270
RAZI PHARMACEUTICALS	2,905	0.800	0.800	0.800
INDUSTRIES ENGINEERING	6,475	0.790	0.790	0.800
INDUSTRIAL CERAMIC	109,051	1.350	1.350	1.390
1. CENTRAL MANUFACTURING	9,034	0.590	0.590	0.580
NATIONAL POLYMER 501	350	0.850	0.850	0.880
NATIONAL MULTI ENG. IND. /MACH.	136,204	0.790	0.790	1.000
GRAND TOTAL	746212			

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Financial Markets		
in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank		
Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin		
Date: 4/1/1996		
Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7106
Swiss Franc	1.0966	1.1021
Deutsche Mark	0.4891	0.4915
Swiss Franc	0.6074	0.6124
French Franc	0.1433	0.1440
Japanese Yen	0.6122	0.6156
Dutch Guilder	0.4369	0.4391
Swedish Krona	*****	*****
Italian Lira	0.0450	0.0452
Belgian Franc	*****	*****
Other Currencies		
Date: 4/1/1996		
Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahrein Dinar	1.8630	1.8780
Lebanese Lira	0.045745	0.045815
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1898

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES		
LONDON (R1) - Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Friday.		
One U.S. dollar	1.3572/82	Canada n dollar
	1.4458/68	Deutschmarks
	1.6188/98	Dutch guilders
	1.1656/66	Swiss francs
	29.71/75	Belgian francs
	4.9480/30	French francs
	1580.82.3	Italian lire
	103.94/04	Japanese yen
	6.6210/10	Swedish crowns
	6.3710/60	Norwegian crowns
	5.5886/98	Danish crowns
	1.4252/52	Singapore dollars
	0.7411/16	Australian dollars
	7.7340/50	Hong Kong dollars
One sterling	\$1.5490/00	
One ounce of gold	\$386.30/396.80	

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Bulls keep winning; T-Wolves beat Suns for first time

CHARLOTTE (AP) — Shaking off the distraction of a somber homecoming, Michael Jordan scored 27 points Thursday night and helped lead the decisive run in the Chicago Bulls' 117-93 victory over Charlotte.

Jordan, playing about 192 kilometres from where a man is on trial for the July 1993 slaying of his father, added five assists and five rebounds before sitting out the entire fourth quarter.

Jordan's 34-minute performance helped Chicago improve its league-leading record to 27-3, a mark that also represents the best 30-game start in the Bulls' history.

There were 16 lead changes and four ties before Chicago took control with a 19-6 run bridging the end of the first half and the start of the second. Jordan had seven points in the surge, and Dennis Rodman added six points and six rebounds as the Bulls built a 61-51 edge.

Timberwolves 98, Suns 93: In Phoenix, Tom Gugliotta hit a 19-footer from the corner late in the game, bringing Minnesota from behind for the final time, and the Timberwolves beat the Phoenix Suns for the first time in their seven-year existence.

Gugliotta, who scored 19 points, got his final basket with 2:39 to play, a jumper that gave the Wolves a 91-90 lead. Doug West made two free throws with 1:48 remaining, and Gugliotta assisted on a dunk by West with 32 seconds to go as Minnesota went ahead 95-91.

Gugliotta also got the game's last rebound, pulling down a 3-point miss by Michael Finley and hitting a

free throw for the final score. Christian Laettner had 21 points and eight rebounds and Isaiah Rider added 18 points. Finley had 18 points for Phoenix, Charles Barkley 17 and Tony Smith 14.

Supersonics 84, Heat 81: In Miami, Gary Payton came up with a crucial jump ball and then made three crucial free throws in the fourth quarter as Seattle won its seventh straight game.

With 25 seconds left and the Sonics leading 81-78, Payton forced Keith Askins into a jump ball. Kevin Willis of Miami appeared to have control, but the ball skirted loose and Payton came up with it and drew a foul. He hit both shots to put the Sonics up 83-78.

Askins hit a 3-pointer to pull the Heat to 83-81 and Payton, who had 18 points, countered with a free throw. Miami had a chance to send

the game into overtime, but Rex Chapman's 3-point shot went Askew after he collided with Hersey Hawkins while shooting.

Shawn Kemp led the Sonics with 21 points. Hawkins added 18 points for Seattle.

Willis scored a season-high 25 points and pulled down 15 rebounds.

Knicks 105, Nets 93: In New York, seven Knicks scored in double figures and Charles Smith came off the bench to lead a fourth-quarter rally as New York broke a three-game losing streak.

New York, which had lost four of its previous five games, won for the first time since Patrick Ewing went down with an ankle injury.

Looking confused on offense and lackadaisical on defense through the third quarter, the Knicks played with purpose in the fourth, holding

the Nets to 18 points in the period.

Smith scored eight of his 13 points in the final period. Hubert Davis, another reserve, had 16, and John Starks and Anthony Mason each had 13. Charles Oakley added 12.

P.J. Brown led the Nets, who have lost four of their last five games, with 23 points and 11 rebounds.

Bullets 112, Mavericks 100: In Landover, Maryland, Juwan Howard scored 18 of his 27 points in the second half as Washington dealt Dallas its eighth straight road loss.

Howard had eight rebounds to go along with his 27 points, which matched his season high. Robert Pack scored 23 and George Muresan had 17 points and 13 rebounds for the Bullets, who were without starters Chris Webber (strained shoulder) and Calbert Cheaney (sore lower leg).

Jim Jackson led Dallas with a season-high 33 points and George McCloud had 21. The Mavericks haven't won on the road since Dec. 1 and have dropped eight of nine overall.

Hawks 104, Raptors 101 OT: In Atlanta, Mookie Blaylock scored 8 of his 26 points in overtime after Steve Smith forced the extra period with a 3-pointer as Atlanta snapped a three-game losing streak.

Smith, who scored 27 points, gave the Hawks a 92-92 tie with 7.7 seconds left in regulation. Blaylock put Atlanta in front to stay in overtime when he hit a 14-footer in the lane for a 94-92 lead with 2:49 to play.



Dolphins head coach Don Shula greets his son Cincinnati Bengal head coach Dave Shula (left) prior to the start of their matchup October 2, 1994 in a meeting that marked the first time in American pro sports history that a father and son have coached against one another (Reuters photo)

Shula quits as Dolphins' coach

MIAMI (AP) — Don Shula's record-breaking reign as the Miami Dolphins' coach is over.

"It was a tough decision, one I haven't had to make in 33 years of coaching," Shula told WTVJ-TV on Thursday, his 66th birthday.

Shula had one year left on his contract but decided to call it quits after a league-record 347 victories. This season he led a Miami team with Super Bowl expectations to a 9-7 record and a 37-22 first-round loss in the playoffs Saturday at Buffalo.

He called this season his most frustrating and was offended by newspaper columns and polls suggesting it was time to quit after 26 years in Miami. The availability of Jimmy Johnson, former coach of the Dallas Cowboys and college football's Miami Hurricanes, only increased pressure on Shula despite his unmatched career record of 347-173-6.

Dolphins owner Wayne Huizenga attended a birthday party Thursday for Shula but declined to confirm that his coach had resigned.

"We'll talk tomorrow," Huizenga told WPLG-TV. "It's not appropriate to say anything right now."

Shula's decision followed a meeting with Huizenga on Wednesday. It was unclear whether Shula might remain with the Dolphins in another capacity.

As recently as Sunday, a day after the loss to Buffalo, Shula said he would honor the final year of his contract. Dolphins spokesman Harvey Greene said he last spoke with Shula on Wednesday, after a reporter phoned asking whether the coach still planned to return next season.

"Coach's answer to me was, 'nothing has changed,'" Greene said. "This has caught me by surprise if it's true."

Reaction to the news in South Florida was mixed. During halftime of the Miami Heat's game against Seattle, some fans cheered a broadcast on video monitors and the public-address system saying that Shula had resigned.

But Heat coach Pat Riley, who shared a recent Sports Illustrated magazine cover with Shula, had only praise for the Dolphins' coach.

"He's simply one of the greatest coaches in the history of any sport — period," Riley said. "I believe that under the circumstances, the man has so much dignity and pride and respect that it was a very difficult year for him."

Dolphins linebacker Bryan Cox said the criticism was unfair.

"South Florida doesn't know what they're going to miss yet," Cox said on his weekly radio show. "Next year at this time they'll be talking about, 'we want Shula back.'"

WPLG sportscaster Jimmy Cefalo, who played under Shula from 1978-84 and hosts the coach's weekly television show, said he still thinks Shula is a good coach.

"I think he took a very difficult situation with a handful of prima donnas and brought them into the playoffs," he said. "I don't disagree with his decision."

Graf's father to stay in jail

STUTTGART (R) — The father of German tennis star Steffi Graf failed on Thursday in his latest bid to be allowed out of prison while public prosecutors probe a multi-million dollar tax evasion case which also targets her.

A judge in the southwestern city of Mannheim, where Peter Graf is being held, ruled that the player's father should stay in prison but did not give reasons for the decision.

The verdict was the latest in a series of rulings rejecting Graf's bids to get out of jail. Prosecutors have fought every attempt, arguing he could flee or could alter evidence while investigators probe allegations that the family dodged tax.

Lawyers for Graf can appeal against the ruling. Graf has sought to placate prosecutors by making two written statements on his tax arrangements. But he has yet to allow himself to be interviewed by authorities.

Graf, who was placed in investigative custody in August, has managed his daughter's finances since early in her career, during which she is believed to have earned about 100 million marks (\$70 million). Steffi Graf has already deposited 20 million marks (\$14 million) to cover taxes investigators say may have been evaded.

Peter Graf broke his silence over the affair with a first written statement in early December, in which he said his multi-millionaire daughter had nothing to do with the tax allegations.

Amman prepares to host Asian Squash Championship

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Jordan Squash Federation (JSF) is putting the finishing touches on final preparations for hosting the 8th Asian Squash Championship which opens in Amman Monday, while three of the 13 participating teams were due to arrive here today.

The Al Hassan Squash Centre, considered the region's most sophisticated squash arena, will be the venue for the eight-day championship bringing together the largest Asian gathering in the sport. The participating delegations represent Bahrain, Hong Kong, India, South Korea, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Taiwan and Jordan.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan had inaugurated the Kingdom's newest sports facility which offers six courts including two centre courts seating 700 and 200 spectators respectively.

Officials and players of the Jordanian team were elated with the 'hosting of the championship at the new centre. JSF Chairman Mohammad Siraj Friday told the press that the championship would mark a turning point for the sport in the Kingdom. "The world's best players will be in Amman. It is a great opportunity for our players to benefit from their experience."

Mr. Siraj said that it was an honour for Jordan to host such a championship and that he hoped local sponsors would support such initiatives in the Kingdom. He said the championship's cost amounts to JD 50,000.

Monday's opening ceremony will be held at 4 p.m. at the Sports Palace Court. During the championship, the general assembly of the Asian Squash Federation will hold its meetings in Amman on Jan. 9.

FIFA lash out at Maradona

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — FIFA general secretary Sepp Blatter on Friday slammed Diego Maradona's threat to bring players out on strike during the World Cup if plans for bigger goals go ahead.

"We must remember that, in 1986, (Maradona) needed to use his hands to score a goal," Blatter said in reference to the controversial goal scored by the Argentine against England in the tournament's quarter-final in Mexico.

Maradona's threat to lead players out on strike at the 1998 finals in France, published in a Spanish magazine earlier this week, came after Blatter proposed enlarging the goal to make games more exciting.

Under the plan, goalposts would be widened by the width of two balls — approximately 50 centimetres — while the height of the cross bar would increase by one ball's diameter.

"Maradona has said many things in his life... I do not think players will go on strike," Blatter told a news conference after attending the draw for the Asian Olympics qualifying tournament here.

"In 1998 he will be 38 years old and I'm not sure if he will be able to play," he added. Blatter said that national football associations and clubs were still divided over the proposal.

"(The plan) is creating a lot of interest. We hope to get a second division team in Europe to try it later this year," he said.

Blatter said that goalkeepers were taller and bigger-built now and there were better boots for scoring. "There are also more opportunities to score, but more teams tend to opt for more cautious and defensive games, instead of attacking," he said.

Peter Velappan, Asia's top soccer official, said earlier Friday he would support the controversial plans, but said he doubted it would help make football a better spectacle.

"I think about football like the Church — there is only a little amount you can change before you alter the whole essence," said Velappan, general secretary of the Kuala Lumpur-based Asian Football Confederation.

But Velappan said he fully supported FIFA's desire to look at ways of making football more attractive, which have involved proposals such as basketball-style timeouts, and kick-ins instead of throw-ins.

Packers pin hopes on Favre

GREEN BAY, Wisconsin (AP) — Strong safety Leroy Butler was asked to name three reasons why the Green Bay Packers presume they can upset the Super Bowl champion San Francisco 49ers on Saturday, especially with an average defence.

"Brett, Brett and Brett," Butler said, as in Favre, Favre and Favre.

Favre, named the U.S. National Football League's most valuable player after setting an NFL record with 38 touchdown passes and guiding green bay to its first NFC central title in 23 years, simply smiled and shrugged.

He's used to this sort of endorsement, starting with his coach. But Favre also had a few words of encouragement for his strong safety this week.

"I want Leroy to know we need a little help out of them, too," Favre said. "We're going to try to put up as many points as we can. If they can hold them, you know, we can win this ballgame."

Green Bay's inconsistent and 14th-rated defence relied on Favre's big year to go 11-5. The defence recorded an NFL record-low 16 takeaways and the pass rush diminished in the final month after defensive end Reggie White tore his left hamstring.

But in Sunday's 37-20 wild-card victory

over Atlanta, defensive coordinator Fritz Shurmur unveiled a new defensive scheme that held Atlanta to a mere 21 yards rushing.

To slow down star receiver Jerry Rice, Shurmur is cooking up new tricks to disrupt the 49ers, something he did exceedingly well while with the Rams for nine seasons.

"He comes up with some pretty good stuff," Butler said. "I think that's going to be the key."

Even coach Mike Holmgren, not usually one to boast, proclaimed after Sunday's game: "We're going to win it all, why not?"

Whether it was a psychological play or something said in the heat of the moment, it became an incentive for the 49ers.

Favre said he saw nothing wrong with what his coach said.

"I hope all the players feel that way," said Favre. "Call it Cocky, call it what you want. We can't just sit here and say, 'man, San Francisco's great. It's going to be tough... we're pretty good, too.'"

Butler said Holmgren has replaced his proclamation with words of warning.

"He has toned it down some," Butler said. "But deep down inside, he believes we're going all the way. We believe it, too. And Brett is the reason."

Milan splash out \$225,000 for new pitch

ROME (R) — Italian League leaders A.C. Milan have splashed out \$225,000 to have the city-owned San Siro pitch turfied in time for their opening new year game against Sampdoria.

Milan, who go into Sunday's game one point clear of second-placed Fiorentina, have drawn their last two home games against Napoli and Torino.

On both occasions Milan coach Fabio Capello argued that the poor condition of the San Siro pitch had handicapped his side's attacking game.

Since stadium renovations were carried out for the 1990 World Cup, the San Siro pitch has sparked consistent controversy. It has been re-

turfied 10 times in the past five years.

The Milan attack will be led on Sunday by newly crowned European foot baller of the year Georges Weah, flanked by Roberto Baggio and Marco Simone.

Dejan Savicevic is not yet fully fit and he will be replaced by Zvonimir Boban in midfield alongside Marcel Desailly and Demetrio Albertini.

For the second time this season Sampdoria turn to a second choice goalkeeper in 21-year-old Matteo Sereni.

First choice Angelo Pagotto, who is to undergo a knee cartilage operation, originally came into the side at the start of the season following an

injury to former Italian international Walter Zenga.

Second-placed Fiorentina travel to face in-form AS Roma, who beat champions Juventus 2-0 in Turin on the final day of 1995.

This match brings together two Swedish midfielders, Jonas Thern of Roma and Stefan Schwarz of Fiorentina who began their professional careers together at Swedish Club Malmo.

Thern argues that Fiorentina's successful season owes a lot to Schwarz. "He's an inspirational figure on the field, a player who always wants to win, who never gives up," he said.

"If this year's Fiorentina are a much improved side,

Gascoigne facing further ban

GLASGOW (AFP) — Rangers' controversial midfielder Paul Gascoigne will start a two-match suspension later this month after a stormy match with Aberdeen at Ibrox in November.

He was given a one-match suspension after escaping action by the match referee and 12 disciplinary points were against his name after a special hearing by the Scottish Football Association.

Now yellow cards in his last two matches have taken the 27-year-old Gascoigne over the 16-point threshold for the second time since arriving from Lazio last summer.

He will miss the premier division match against Hearts at Ibrox on January 20



Sascha Hupmann (1) of TSV Bayer Germany and Igor Kurashov of CSKA (Moscow) fight for the control of the ball under the basket during European Championship on January 4 in Moscow (Reuters photo)

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMAR HIRSCH
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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

478 758532 9A886 4K8

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1A Pass 1C Pass
2A Pass 2C Pass
What action do you take?

A - You have the wrong hand to pass, and are not strong enough to bid two diamonds — that would be unconditionally forcing and, with your partial misfit and minimum values, you don't want to get too high. Bid one no trump. Should partner pass, you are almost certainly in your best spot.

Q. 2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AA854 75852 9A1088 4S

The bidding has proceeded:
WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH
1A 1C Pass 2C
What do you bid now?

A - We don't care what sort of non-vulnerable overalls partner makes. We can't imagine any North hand which won't offer at least some play for game. To bid anything less than four hearts earns the "Chicken of the Year" award.

Q. 3 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

485 78 9A1084 4KQJ763

The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1A Pass 1A Pass 2A Pass 2A
What do you bid now?

A - You have a dead minimum opening bid and, after a diamond lead, your hand could be worthless on any contract other than clubs. Bid three clubs.

Q. 4 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

46 9107632 9A10 4AA72

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
2NT Pass 2A Pass 3C Pass 3C
What do you bid now?

A - No matter what range you use for your two-no-trump opening bids, you should be interested in slam. Start things off by cue-bidding four clubs and see how partner reacts. Regardless of partner's rebid, follow up by cue-bidding five diamonds. By implication, these cue-bids agree hearts as the trump suit.

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GOLD

Bailey looks to Master Oats again

LONDON (R) — Top trainer Kim Bailey has returned to form just in time for Saturday's jumping showpiece, the King George VI chase at Sandown Park, where Cheltenham Gold Cup winner Master Oats is on a retrieval mission.

Bailey had three winners at Nottingham on Thursday, his first for almost a month, and now looks to Master Oats to deal with a top-class field.

The race, traditionally staged on Dec. 26 at Kempton, was lost to a Christmas freeze but has been revived as part of Saturday's Sandown fixture.

The weather claimed another victim earlier in the week when the spectacular, front-running Dublin Flyer was pulled out after veteran trainer Tim Forster found himself unable to work the horse properly because of ice and frost on the gallops.

Dublin Flyer had been fancied to follow up his battling victory in November's Mackeson Gold Cup and his absence is a blow.

Master Oats flopped badly on his seasonal comeback race at Cheltenham early in December and was routinely doped-tested after being pulled up in the home straight.

Jockey Jamie Osborne reported: "The engine just stopped running."

Despite that setback, Master Oats is now 11-2 fourth favourite for Saturday's race following the defection of Dublin Flyer, with rising star One Man at 5-2 favourite and Barton Bank, winner of the King George in 1993 and last fence faller in 1994, at 7-2.

Talented Irish raider Merry Gale is a 5-1 chance.

Bailey, welcoming Thursday's change of fortunes, said: "There's been nothing wrong with the horses, we've just experienced a lot of bad luck recently and in this game it's all about being lucky."

Trainer David Nicholson and jockey Adrian Maguire will testify to that after Barton Bank's dramatic 1994 exit which handed victory to French raider Algan.

Algan is in Saturday's field but at 14-1 he is much less fancied than stable companion Val d'Aiene (8-1). Both are trained by Francois Doumen who has a formidable King George record with four previous victories.

One man, a striking grey horse, attempts to bridge a 26-year gap by delivering success for his trainer Gordon Richards.

Stich, who has played only two matches since fracturing an ankle in Vienna last October, said he needs another three or four weeks to recover from the injury.

Stich is the second leading German player to withdraw from the tournament. Steffi Graf, also citing an injury, will not play in the women's singles.

Stich, who won Wimbledon in 1991, was the world number two in 1993 but has slipped to 12th.

Switzerland in Hopman Cup final

PERTH (AFP) — Switzerland have a chance here Saturday to win the \$510,000 Hopman Cup tennis mixed teams' tournament for the second time.

Martina Hingis and Marc Rosset earned a showdown with the top-seeded Croatian pair, Goran Ivanisevic and Iva Majoli, by tipping out the reigning champions Germany on Friday night.

The Swiss pair crushed Martin Sinner and Anke Huber, winning their singles clashes before completing a clean sweep in the mixed doubles.

Hingis, 15, beat 21-year-old Huber, previously unbeaten in the tournament, 2-6, 6-2, 6-1 in 78 minutes.

Rosset then proved far too good for Sinner, winning 6-2, 6-4 in 58 minutes.

The Swiss pair took the mixed donbles 6-1, 6-3.

Hingis came back in stunning fashion against Huber after trailing 0-4 in the opening set.

"It was pretty tough at that stage," Hingis said later.

"I believe it will be difficult against Iva in the final, too. She also serves well and has a great forehand."

But Hingis will be buoyed by her victory over the Croatian in an exhibition in France a month ago.

"I hope I can do that one more time," Hingis said. "I have never played her in a tournament."

Rosset, like Hingis, completed his third win of the tournament by defeating Sinner.

He said Ivanisevic, who has beaten him eight times in 10 meetings, would be a difficult opponent.

"I cannot say he is the guy I really would like to play," he said.

"But if I can keep my serve



Swiss player Marc Rosset reacts during his Hopman Cup tennis match (Reuters photo)

and try to go to the tie-break against him... you never know.

"I have a chance even if he has beaten me more. I'm pretty confident."

Switzerland had their first Hopman Cup triumph four years ago when Manuela Maleeva-Frangiére and Jakob Hlasek beat Czechoslovakia 2-1 in the final.

Meanwhile the Netherlands ended an unhappy tournament on a sad note Friday when injury forced them to forfeit their tie with

Australia in the Hopman Cup mixed teams' event.

Richard Krajicek was forced to retire with a neck injury when trailing Mark Philippoussis 6-7 (2/7), 1-2 in the men's singles.

His withdrawal came after Brenda Schultz-McCarthy had overcome Nicole Pietrangeli 5-7, 7-5, 6-0 in the women's singles.

The Netherlands were forced to forfeit the men's singles and the mixed doubles, leaving Australia 2-1 winners of the tie.

Slazenger introduce new tennis balls

PERTH (AP) — New tennis balls which make the sport easier for fans to follow are being tested at this week's Hopman Cup team championship.

The new high-visibility balls, manufactured by Slazenger, are impregnated with a fluorescent material which makes them easier to see — particularly under the artificial lighting used for the Hopman Cup at the Burswood Dome.

The new ball will be used throughout the tennis Australia summer circuit, including the Australian Open.

The ball is the second technological innovation to be unveiled at the Hopman Cup. The TEL (television electronic lines) system has been used in place of line judges for the past three years.

Tournament director Paul McNamee said the new ball adds to the spectacle for fans watching on television.

"I have personally used the new high-visibility ball and believe it to be a breakthrough in ball technology," McNamee said. "Just watching the ball on television shows how much easier it is to see."

Kafelnikov tames Rusedski

ADELAIDE (AFP) — Russian top seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov defused the big serve of Britain's Greg Rusedski to move into the semi-finals of the Australian Hardcourt Tennis Championship here Friday.

Kafelnikov, bidding for his second hardcourt title here, beat seventh seed Rusedski 6-2, 6-3 and will meet Argentina's Javier Frana in the semi-finals.

Frana beat his second seed of the tournament on Friday, eliminating third-seeded Italian Renzo Furlan 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 after ousting Australian Todd Woodbridge, the fifth seed, in the opening round.

In the other semi-final, Zimbabwean Byron Black will play Czech Martin Damm.

Black continued his march towards his first ATP singles final by knocking out second seed Daniel Vacek of the Czech Republic 7-6 (9/7), 6-7 (7/5), 6-4.

Seles arrives for Australian tournament

SYDNEY (R) — Monica Seles said on Friday that she hoped to be back at the peak of her considerable tennis-playing powers in time for the start of this year's French Open in May.

Seles, in Sydney to take part in next week's Peters International, formerly the NSW Open, told a news conference that she was happy with her progress, despite injury and illness since making a triumphant return to tennis at the Canadian Open last August.

Seles, 22, had spent nearly two and a half years out of the game after being stabbed by an obsessed Steffi Graf fan at a tournament in Hamburg in April, 1993.

Undeafated in 21 matches in Australia, Seles will make the next big step of her comeback at the Australian Open in Melbourne from January 15, a Grand Slam tournament she won three times between 1991 and 1993.

Jointly ranked number one in the world with Germany's Graf, Seles went on from the Canadian Open to lose an emotional U.S. Open final to Graf early in September.

She was prevented from playing more tournaments after the U.S. Open by knee and ankle injuries and a virus.

Asked when she hoped to be back to her best, Seles said: "Hopefully by the French Open, or maybe even the Lipton Championships (in Florida from February 18)."

"I was hoping it would be by the Australian Open but all those things came up unexpectedly and it was a pretty disappointing way to end the year."

"I'm still carrying a virus and feeling pretty weak. I'm getting treatment every day and otherwise I'm very healthy and eager to get back on the court," she said.

The winner of eight Grand Slam titles, Seles now hopes to win a fourth French Open to add to the three she won between 1990 and 1992.

Success at the French Open, Seles suggested, might also set her up for her first Wimbledon title, the only one of the four Grand Slam tournaments the Yugoslav-born

American has yet to win.

She described her Australian open win over Graf in January, 1993, as one of the highlights of her career.

"I came to Australia and played some great tennis, and then had a great few weeks playing in Chicago and Paris," she said.

"I was finally able to find a balance. Tennis. I'd have to say it was among the best few months of my life."

Life changed dramatically for Seles three months later and she also spoke on Friday of treatment she has had from sports psychologists since the stabbing.

"I go through different mental rehearsals to get comfortable," Seles said.

"But one thing I don't want is to be talking about him (her attacker) after two and a half years. What happened was not fair, but I'm at peace with that," she said.

Ironically, Graf is not competing in this year's open after undergoing foot surgery.

With the white city courts in Sydney's eastern suburbs still wet from early afternoon rain, thoughts of Seles's safety were never far away.

While Seles arrived without a security escort, tournament director Barry Masters said security guards would be with her at all times once the tournament began.

Masters stressed security would be discreet and similar to that given to other leading players. At least 12 security guards would be on duty throughout the week, with the tournament also adopting the standard practice of having two guards stationed behind the players' chairs during all matches.

"There will be a couple of guards around her at all times," Masters said.

"Since the incident we have always used security guards, but this tournament has always had a very friendly atmosphere."

Masters was delighted that Seles had chosen the Sydney tournament as her next comeback tournament and expected a sellout 6,500 centre court crowd for each of her matches.

Chinese swimmers seek to repair tarnished image at World Cup

HONG KONG (AFP) — World record holder Le Jingyi will lead China's efforts as it continues to rehabilitate its drug-tainted image in international swimming when the 1996 World Cup short-course series begins here Saturday.

China opted out of last year's World Cup just weeks after seven Chinese swimmers — including two world champions — tested positive for banned drugs at the Hiroshima Asian Games.

Le, who heads a 14-member Chinese team, won three gold medals at the world short-course championships held last month on Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach.

The two-day Hong Kong event, the first of an eight-leg World Cup series, has attracted 130 swimmers from 16 countries.

Nineteen Chinese swimmers, 11 of them women, have tested positive since July, 1990, coinciding with China's rise to the top of women's swimming.

Chinese swimmers remained in self-imposed competitive exile for most of last year, but returned to finish a distant second to Australia at the Rio championships.

Some swimming nations had, however, made it clear they did not want to compete against China because of its repeated drug infractions.

Australia, Canada and the United States banned Chinese swimmers from the Pan-Pacific championships

Largely in response to China's transgressions, FINA, the sport's governing body, adopted harsher penalties for steroid users in November, including a four-year suspension for a first offence and a life-ban after a second offence.

Le, a 20-year-old from Shanghai, holds short-course world records in five women's events.



Barcelona defender Miguel Angel Nadal (left) celebrates his first goal for his team with teammate Meho Kodro during their Spanish first division soccer match against arch-rivals Espanyol in Barcelona (Reuters photo)

Leaders Atletico lose key players

MADRID (R) — Atletico Madrid are hoping that the absence of two top players this weekend will not affect the form that has given them a seven-point lead at the top of the Spanish first division.

Atletico will be without Spanish internationals Jose Luis Caminero and Kiko Narvaez for the home match against mid-table Tenerife, while rivals Barcelona and Espanyol face more difficult games.

Caminero, who picked up a yellow card in Wednesday's 3-1 win at Salamanca, and Narvaez, who limped off with an ankle injury, have been key figures in Atletico's revival this season.

The absence of Narvaez — who could be out for four weeks — will probably mean the debut of striker Juan Carlos Gomez, while Caminero's place in midfield will be filled by Roberto Fresnedoso, who has come on as substitute in several games this season.

Sitting on their lead, Atletico are already assured of reaching the halfway stage in the championship in top spot with two games still to play.

Curiously coach Radomir Antic's impressive record — won 14, drawn three, lost two — is identical to that he had when he was dismissed from Real Madrid in January 1992.

Real lost that league title.

and have not done much to suggest they can take this year's championship.

Currently 12 points off the pace in sixth, Real desperately need to win away at Meri-

da if they are to retain the league. With teenage forward Raul Gonzalez injured, coach Jorge Valdano is likely to turn to Jose Amavisca to add fire-power up front.

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2. Interested tenderers may obtain copies of tender documents from the (Central Tenders Committee — Jordan University) Amman against a non-refundable fee.

3. All offers must be accompanied by a bid bond from an acceptable bank in the amount of 5 per cent of the total price valid for 150 days.

4. Offers shall be deposited at the Central Tenders Committee — Jordan University not later than 12:00 p.m. March 3, 1996.

Tend. No.	Description	Fee of tender Documents	Closing date for Depositing offers
21/96	Civil sanitary and electro mechanical works.	JD100,000	3.3. 1996
22/96	Non-medical equipment, steam boiler, central chiller system.	JD80	3.3. 1996
23/96	Laundry, kitchen and cafeteria equipment	JD80	3.3. 1996

Interested party should refer to Central Tenders Committee, University of Jordan, University Street-Amman-Al Jubeiha, & should be accompanied with a valid professional licence & commercial certificate in order to obtain a complete tender specification and conditions.

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Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:05, 8:30, 10:30 p.m.	Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Theplay "Ahlan Tatbie"
	* The Santa Clause	* Batman For ever			Welcome Normalisation
	Shows: 12:30, 5:00	Shows: 3:30, 8:30			Shows: 8:30 p.m.
		* ASSASSINS			For reservation call 625155.
		Shows: 6, 9:30			

Iraq sanctions extended

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — Following repeated reports that Iraq misled and withheld information from weapons inspectors, the Security Council agreed Friday to maintain its 5-year-old economic embargo against Baghdad.

The move came almost three weeks after Rolf Ekeus, the chief U.N. weapons inspector, said there was no evidence that Iraq destroyed its missile warheads for biological weapons or chemical agents.

Mr. Ekeus also showed the council a missile gyroscope that was pulled from Iraq river. He said the device is used to guide missiles to targets further than 1,900 kilometres a distance that violates U.N. weapons reg-

ulations. The council has said repeatedly it will not ease its 5-year-old economic embargo against Iraq until Baghdad fully cooperates with weapons inspectors charged with dismantling the country's nuclear, biological and chemical warfare programmes.

The sanctions were imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The council reviews the sanctions every 60 days. In a report to the council last month, Mr. Ekeus said that while Iraq has released hundreds of thousands of pages of documents on its weapons programmes "many of the most important documents... are still being withheld from the mission."

Mr. Ekeus has also said that Iraq consistently misled weapons inspectors and that its past missile and biological weapons programmes were larger or more advanced than previously declared.

The council has agreed to let Iraq sell up to \$1 billion in oil to buy humanitarian goods every three months under U.N. supervision. Baghdad has rejected the offer, saying the plan infringes on its sovereignty.

Karl Inderfurth, a U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said in a statement that Iraq still has failed to comply with all U.N. resolutions that might lead to a lifting of a trade embargo.

"We begin this new year with scepticism borne of experience. Scepticism because

for over five years, Iraq has refused to take the necessary steps which would allow the council to lift the sanctions regime."

Mr. Inderfurth harshly criticised Iraq's faulty compliance with U.N. demands. "This dangerous record makes it essential in our view for Iraq to unequivocally undertake those actions which will leave no doubt of its 'peaceful intentions.'"

"The region and the international community cannot afford to have this council have the job half-done," the statement said.

He noted Iraq must demonstrate peaceful intentions as set forth in U.N. resolution 687 of 1991, the Gulf war ceasefire resolution.

Erbakan to disregard Iraq embargo

ANKARA (Agencies) — Necmettin Erbakan, leader of the pro-Islamic Welfare Party, main winners in the Turkish legislative election last month, said Friday that he would expel a U.S.-led force based in Turkey and disregard a U.N. embargo on Iraq if he came to power.

"The embargo on Iraq has cost us \$30 billion over the past five years," Mr. Erbakan told a news conference for foreign journalists. "When we come to power, the first thing we'll do will be to secure close trade relations with Iraq."

On the U.S.-led mission

Baghdad troops, Mr. Erbakan said: "We'll send this force."

"The Poised Hammer (Provide Comfort) has no useful function, furthermore it is helping (separatist Kurdish) terrorists," he said, adding, "When we come to power, we'll kindly request them to leave Turkey."

Saying "terrorists," he was referring to the outlawed Kurdistan Labour Party, or PKK, fighting for a homeland in southeastern Turkey.

The election made the Welfare the largest group in the 550-seat parliament with 158 deputies, but the Islamists lack an absolute majority.

However, political analysts suggest that Mr. Erbakan may form a coalition govern-

ment with the conservative Motherland Party, which came third in the election. Motherland leader Mesut Yilmaz, among all other party leaders, is the only one who does not rule out a coalition with the Welfare.

On Turkey's Kurdish problem, in which over 21,000 people have been killed in violence in the country's southeast since 1984 when the PKK started operating, Mr. Erbakan said: "We'll solve this question by applying the principle of Islamic fraternity."

"Both the Turks and the Kurds are Muslim. We'll lift all pressures on the Kurds and bring economic prosperity to the southeast. This will solve the problem."

Mr. Erbakan also said that if he came to power, he would renegotiate a customs union accord, which took effect between Ankara and the European Union (EU) Jan. 1, since "the agreement has very unjust provisions for Turkey."

"They (the EU) make economic decisions, and Turkey (which is not a full member of the union) has to implement those decisions without its consent, according to this customs union agreement."

"This kind of a relationship can only exist between the master and the slave. We can't accept this," he said. "When we come to power, Turkey will no longer be the servant, the slave of the West."



YAHYA AYYASH MOURNED BY MOTHER: The mother of Yahya Ayyash mourns her son's death Friday while holding a portrait of her son, known as "the engineer." The death of Mr. Ayyash in the Gaza strip has been confirmed by Palestinian security sources (see page 1 story) (Reuters photo)

Jordan wants Arab meeting to discuss Iraq

By Rana Sabbagh
Reuters

AMMAN — Jordan has urged Arab countries to meet for talks on how to deal with a worsening situation in Iraq and prevent it falling apart. The call followed regional criticism of Jordan's efforts after Iraqi defections to Amman in August to convene a meeting of Iraqi opposition leaders to seek change in Baghdad.

"We believe in the need to convene an Arab meeting or meetings to agree on how to seriously work to block foreign intervention and regional desires that could be aroused by the tragic situation (in Iraq)," Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabarti told Reuters Thursday.

Syria has met regularly with Turkey and Iran, Iraq's non-Arab neighbours, to coordinate policies on Iraq since the end of the 1991 Gulf war.

"There are basic points which all of us agree on... the need to prevent the consolidation of the de facto division in Iraq and facing

any foreign attempts to exploit the existing situation in Iraq," he said.

The Kurdish north of Iraq has been outside Iraqi government control and under Western protection since the Gulf war. The Sunni Muslim dominated the government of President Saddam Hussein had to brutally suppress a Shiite Muslim rebellion in southern Iraq in 1991.

Mr. Kabarti said the proposed Arab meeting "should discuss mechanisms that help the Iraqi people practise their right in the constitutional form for a regime that secures and guarantees freedoms and rights under the present (ethnic) mix."

This would help to end the suffering caused by the U.N. trade embargo imposed after the war and "preserve the unity of its people and territory," he said.

His Majesty King Hussein has been promoting the concept of a federation among the major components of Iraq's population, but most of his neighbours fear this will divide Iraq.

They are suspicious of his attempts to host a conference

of the Iraqi opposition in Amman, so far preferring the status quo in Iraq to having to cope with a new regime if President Saddam is removed.

Official sources said Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak turned down a Jordanian request for convening a high-level Arab meeting in Cairo on Iraq during a visit to Jordan last week.

Many diplomats and government officials believe the idea of a broad-based Iraqi conference in Amman is floundering out because of a lack of support in Jordan or abroad and deep divisions among the opposition.

Instead, Jordan might encourage smaller groups of Iraqi opposition figures to visit Amman for consultations.

But Mr. Kabarti said the venue and form of any opposition meeting, raised in talks the King had with Iraqis in both London and Amman recently, was still under discussion.

"It is originally their idea, and it is up to them to define the formula, shape and venue of the meeting," he said.

New Algerian cabinet named

PARIS (R) — Algeria on Friday named a new government headed by Ahmed Ouyahia, the first President Liamine Zerroual was elected in November.

The cabinet list, published in a presidency statement carried by the official Algerian news agency APS, includes changes in the foreign affairs ministry where Ahmed Attaf, a junior minister and spokesman of the outgoing government, replaced Mohamed Saleh Demeri.

But the main economic ministers kept their portfolios with Amar Makhloufi reappointed minister of energy and mining, Ahmed Benhitour, finance minister, and Mourad Benachennou, minister for industry and restructuring.

Both Benhitour and Benachennou were the main driving force behind market economic reforms backed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The list did not include the defence portfolio, which apparently remained in the hands of Zerroual. A dissident leader of the outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Ahmed Merani, was named minister of religious affairs, replacing Sassi Lamouri. Mohamed Ben Mansur, who supervised the organisation of the first presidential poll last November, remains minister of interior. Mihoub Mihoubi, Zerroual's political adviser who also played a central role in his campaign for the presidency, was named as minister of communication and culture. Ministries of justice, universities and scientific research, Moudjahidine (independence war veterans affairs) agriculture and fishing, health and population, posts and telecommunications, remained unchanged.

Bosnian rivals agree to army liaisons

VIENNA (Agencies) — The former belligerents in the Bosnian conflict struck two military accords on building confidence in the shattered former Yugoslav republic, the president of the conference said.

But the two delegations, representing the Bosnian government and Muslim-Croat Federation on one side and rebel Serbs on the other, were struggling to find an agreement on programme of weapons inspections, Istvan Gyarmati said.

Mr. Gyarmati, who is chairing the talks sponsored by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), said the dispute surfaced after the two parties took part in a preliminary exchange of information on their heavy arms stockpiles Friday morning.

The protocol on the establishment of military liaison missions was adopted "by acclamation," he said. "It's not a bad start."

After this initial agreement, the Bosnian and Serb delegations could not agree to the type of weapons and army units which should be subject to a programme of mutual inspections.

Earlier the former warring factions reached an accord to set up liaison missions for their respective armies, Mr. Gyarmati said.

The talks are aimed at producing a definitive agreement on confidence-building measures for post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina by Jan. 26, as required by the Bosnian peace agreement signed last month.

After Friday's accord, the talks on confidence-building measures were adjourned until Wednesday. Talks on disarmament will resume Jan. 16.

A separate series of negotiations on an arms reduction treaty for the whole of former Yugoslavia, designed to bring together successor states from the collapsed country, finally got underway Friday morning after a half-day delay triggered by a procedural objection raised by the Bosnian party.

The government delegation, headed by senior foreign ministry official Hasan Derwichegovic, refused to permit the Serb team to sit at the table as it felt this would be tantamount to international recognition for the Bosnian Serbs' self-styled Serb Republic.

Norwegian General Vigleik Eide, who is chairing the disarmament talks, finally drew up a compromise to get over the procedural hitch allowing all five sides to sit at the same table Friday morning.

He said he would "not underestimate possible difficulties" but did not foresee blocking problems.

The five parties to the second string of talks are Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Bosnian Muslim-Croat Federation, the Bosnian Serb republic, Croatia and the rump Yugoslavia.

The twin-track negotiations are seen as crucial to the success of the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) as it strives to police a fragile peace across Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Under the peace accords the OSCE must secure agreement on an international arms reduction treaty between Bosnia-Herzegovina and its neighbours Croatia and the rump Yugoslavia by June 6.

Also attending the talks were representatives of the OSCE — the 53-member pan-European group plus the United States and Canada, the "Contact Group" on Bosnia-Herzegovina — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States — and the presidency of the European Union (EU), currently held by Italy.

In Mostar, Bosnia, the shooting of two Muslim policemen sent ethnic tension soaring in the divided city of Mostar Friday and an EU administrator appealed for calm, saying dialogue — not NATO intervention — was vital.

"It would be a lie if I said I had everything under control but I hope that serious people will understand how dangerous the situation is," said Hans Koschnick, the EU administrator in the war-shattered south Bosnian city. "Do not throw oil on the fire. We are trying to calm things down but we are not in a good situation," he told a news conference.

He was speaking after a hail of bullets from the Croat sector of the historic city hit a Muslim police car on Thursday night, seriously wounding two officers inside.

Mr. Koschnick, who leads an EU administration set up in 1994 after a Croat-Muslim war devastated the city, said the solution to Mostar's problems had to be civilian and not imposed by the NATO-led Bosnian Peace Implementation Force (IFOR).

"There is no need to involve IFOR in the situation in Mostar. People must get together in a democratic way and by talking build understanding for the future," he said.

The EU has been trying to form a joint administration uniting the Muslim and Croat communities who face each other over a "confrontation line."

COLUMN

Court counts on parchment to resolve affair

EDINBURGH (AFP) — A court due to rule on a spat between two cousins contesting an earldom had to dig deep into the family archives Thursday to unearth ancient Latin documents that shed some light on the family feud. The 17th-century documents were brought before the court in a bid to establish once and for all which of the two pretenders to the title of 11th Earl of Selkirk should inherit the prestigious seat of one of Scotland's oldest families. Conservative MP Lord James Douglas-Hamilton and his cousin, Alasdair Douglas-Hamilton, have both put forward claims to succeed the 10th earl, who died in 1994 with no direct heir. The Latin text stipulates that the Earl of Selkirk title should devolve to the youngest Douglas-Hamilton child, while the title of the Duke of Hamilton should go to the eldest-born. Alasdair Douglas-Hamilton's claim points out that his deceased father was the youngest child of the 10th earl. But James Douglas-Hamilton has launched his counterclaim based on the fact that he had to renounce his inheritance of the Duchy of Hamilton — despite being the eldest son of the 10th earl's eldest son — to take up his seat in the British House of Commons. The earl's title comes with an inheritance of some 500,000 pounds (\$770,000) and a seat in the British House of Lords. The two cousins shook hands in the courtroom.

Chinese police chief rapped for funeral

SHANGHAI (AFP) — A county police chief from Hangzhou city in eastern Zhejiang province has got into hot water for organising a funeral procession for his father that jammed traffic for 20 minutes, a newspaper reported Friday. The Xinmin Evening News reported that Cheng Shengrong, chief of Qingling County Police, was given a warning and a demerit point for organising funeral rites attended by 900 people and followed by 20 cars. Mr. Cheng spent 52,000 yuan (\$6,260) on the funeral and accepted gifts worth 62,050 yuan from traffic policemen, hanks, drivers and private factory owners, the report said.

Six trapped overnight in ferris wheel

TOKYO (AFP) — Six people were stranded for 14 hours overnight in sub-zero temperatures inside two gondolas hanging from an amusement park ferris wheel, police said. A 29-year-old taxi driver and his wife, and a group of four junior high school girls were rescued Friday after they were spotted by an early morning jogger at the Tama Tech Park in Tokyo's hilly western suburbs, police said. The 50-metre-high ride was operated by two teenaged part-time workers who apparently stopped and left the wheel while the six were up in the air when the park closed at 5 p.m. Thursday, police said. The nighttime temperature dipped to minus 4.7 degrees Celsius, local weather officials said. The wheel's 36 gondolas could not be opened from inside. "I tried to shake the gondola to let them know we were here, but it didn't work," said the taxi driver, Makoto Nagashima. "I was so cold I thought I wouldn't survive. The wind kept creeping in and my legs hurt and my shoulders got stiff."

Fresh unrest erupts in Bahrain—opposition

NICOSIA (R) — A Bahraini opposition group said that police fired tear gas and rubber bullets and arrested dozens of worshippers who gathered in a mosque to hear a sermon by a Shiite cleric Thursday.

News of the fresh anti-government disturbances in the Gulf Arab island state could not be independently confirmed.

The opposition Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain said the unrest broke out after Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri, a prominent opposition leader, delivered a sermon in the village of Bani Jamra.

"The Initiative (security) Forces attacked the worshippers during Mr. Jamri's sermon and fired tear gas and rubber bullets on the crowd," the group said in a statement sent to Reuters late Thursday.

The statement said the cleric had been told by authorities not to deliver the sermon or lectures. Mr. Jamri, 55, an influential Shiite cleric and former member of Bahrain's dissolved parliament, was placed under house arrest in March and jailed in April. He was released in August.

"Tens of nationals were

arrested after clashes between the gatharers and the Initiative Forces, and the forces imposed a tough clampdown and sealed off the area," it said.

Anti-government unrest erupted in December 1994 in Bahrain after the government arrested a prominent cleric, Sheikh Ali Salman. He was later deported along with three other Muslim clerics accused of fanning the unrest.

The demands of Shiite opponents of the government include the recall of parliament, dissolved in 1975, and the release of political prisoners.

About 65 per cent of Bahrain's indigenous population belong to the Shiite branch of Islam. The country's rulers are Sunni Muslims.

Bahrain's Emir Sheikh Isa Bin Sulman Al Khalifa on national day, Dec. 16, pardoned prisoners held for the unrest, which had largely died down by April. At least 13 civilians and three policemen died and hundreds were detained in the violence.

He said the government would continue to protect national security, restore order and develop the country's consultative council.

Palestinian compensation demand sparks controversy

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — A senior PLO official angered Israelis on Thursday by demanding that Israel compensate Palestinians just as it received reparations for Nazi war crimes.

"While Israel accepted millions of marks from Germany, Israel refused to give compensation to those peo-

ple who lost their sons, or lost their eyes or lost their legs," said Freih Abu Medeen, responsible for justice in PLO leader Yasser Arafat's outgoing Palestinian authority.

Israeli politicians accused on Abu Medeen, a candidate for Palestinian council elections Jan. 20, of comparing Israelis to Nazis.

The government decided Wednesday against blanket compensation for damage claims from the Palestinian uprising that erupted in December 1987 and died down with the signing of an Israeli-PLO peace deal in 1993. It decided instead that a special committee would deal with "exceptional cases," officials said.

Sudan willing to help Lebanon investigate 'Islamist plot'

CAIRO (R) — Sudan is willing to help the Lebanese government investigate an Islamist fundamentalist network uncovered in Lebanon and linked to Sudan, the international Arabic newspaper Al Hayat said Friday.

Sudanese Foreign Minister Bakri Hassan Salih told the newspaper that reports of a Sudanese link were untrue and the Lebanese government had not asked Sudan for any information.

Sources close to the investigation in Lebanon have said

that men accused of killing a Lebanese Muslim cleric in August stated under interrogation that they were trained by Sudanese army officers who came to Lebanon last year.

The Sudanese embassy in Beirut has already denied any links with the men, who are members of a previously unknown Sunni fundamentalist group named Esbat Al Ansar (Band of Supporters).

Brigadier Salih, speaking in Tunis on the sidelines of a meeting of Arab interior ministers, said: "We haven't

yet had any communication (from the Lebanese authorities) but we are fully prepared to cooperate as soon as communication arrives and we will spare no effort to coordinate."

Sudan would then be happy to send an investigating team to Beirut to help the Lebanese, he added.

Brig. Salih dismissed all the reports of a Sudanese connection as "media talk" and said it was most improbable that Lebanese groups would seek military training from Sudanese.